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ON THE NATURE AND EXTENT

OF THE

ATONEMENT OF CHRIST.

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DISCOURSES

ON

THE NATURE AND EXTENT

OF THE

ATONEMENT OF CHRIST.

BY

RALPH WARDLAW, D.D.

THIRD THOUSAND.

GLASGOW:

JAMES MACLEHOSE, 83, BUCHANAN STREET.

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

The circumstances which led to the delivery of the following discourses are adverted to in the introduction to the first of them. In the *Scottish Guardian* Newspaper, of the 5th August, 1842,—in editorial remarks on the opinion given by Dr. John Brown and myself on the question of the propriety, in the then existing state of parties, of the English Dissenting ministers opening their pulpits to the Non-Intrusion clergy of the Scottish Establishment, for the purpose, not of preaching the gospel, but of pleading their own special cause, there appeared the following sentence:—"The only two of any distinction, who have come forward to dissuade their dissenting brethren in England from admitting us into their pulpits, are Dr. Brown of Edinburgh, and Dr. Wardlaw of Glasgow,—men who, to a certain extent, are unsound on the cardinal doctrine of the atonement."—This drew forth a disclaimer and remonstrance from each of the parties thus assailed. In his subsequent comments on the

letter from myself, the Editor says, he "did not regard himself so much to be making a discovery, as to be directing attention to a fact already known;" and, in evidence of the rectitude of his impression, he makes reference to the then recent work of Dr. Marshall, and the "elaborate refutation" contained in it of my views of the atonement.

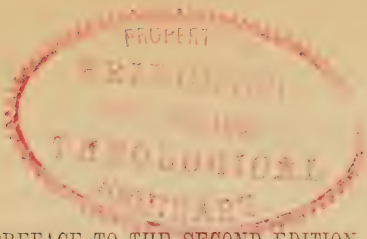
And this reference to the work of Dr. Marshall leads me to the second of the considerations by which my resolution to treat more at large the point at issue was influenced.—I do not feel myself to have the smallest reason for personal dissatisfaction with Dr. Marshall's treatment of me in the volume referred to. Quite the contrary. I sincerely thank him for his good opinion, and his friendly courtesy. But still, when, although without attaching blame to me for it, but rather reflecting on the unsteadiness of some of his own brethren, he represents me as, "to a certain extent" (to use the phrase of the *Guardian*) a kind of *origo mali* in the Secession Church; as having contributed to shake the orthodoxy of its ministers,—to introduce, as a consequence, painful and schismatic controversies,—and, in a word, (though that word is not Dr. Marshall's) to poison the springs of truth in that large, respectable, and eminently useful body of Christians, —it will not be denied that in this too I had a pretty loud and imperative call to self-defence.

To a christian minister there can be no imputation more serious than that of unsoundness—even although couched in qualified terms—on a "cardinal" article of divine truth,—an article so essentially connected, as the atonement is, with the glory of God and the salvation of men. It then becomes his duty,—not for his own sake merely, but for the sake of his ministerial usefulness, which, so far as the imputation is either believed or suspected to be true, cannot fail to be affected by it,—and for the sake of the truth of God, of which, if he be honest, he must consider the views he holds to be those given in the inspired standard,—to take the field, and "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints."—The love of controversy, apart from the love of truth, is irrational and unchristian. But the love of truth may, and at times must, overcome the aversion to controversy. And indeed, in almost all cases, the outcry against controversy is unwisely directed. It should not at all be against controversy, but against the evil spirit which, it must be confessed, has, to a lamentable extent, been infused into the conduct of it. If not in itself a good, it may be admitted to be a necessary evil; and an evil out of which, if the spirit of the combatants be duly guarded, good may arise,—good in proportion to the vital importance of the subject under discussion. I humbly and fondly trust, that in the volume now offered to the public, the spirit will not be found out of har-

mony with evangelical love:—and with regard to the views of the great doctrine of atonement which are defended in it, I must leave the reasoning in vindication of them to the impartial judgment of my fellow-christians and my fellow-servants in the ministry of the gospel. My conscience tells me, in the sight of God, that truth is my object, and truth alone.

R. W.

Barlanerk, 28*th April*, 1843.



PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

REVIEW OF REVIEWS.

Before entering on the more serious business of this Preface, it may be as well to state here, that, with a view to this new edition, the "Discourses" have been subjected to a careful revision.—There is one thing, and one thing only, which I regret; but I have felt it impossible for me, in the present stage of the controversy, to help it. I am anxious to avoid the charge of either injustice or unkindness to any man. Now, Dr. Marshall has publicly and strongly avowed his concern for having published certain portions of the volume to which, both in the Discourses and in the former Preface to them, reference is so repeatedly and pointedly made. I have been obliged, however, to allow the quotations from that work to remain as they were; for two reasons, but chiefly of course for the latter of the two:—that alteration would have disarranged the structure of considerable portions of my own volume;—and that, the terms of Dr. Marshall's regret and recantation having been, although

strong, yet general, not at all defining the portions of his work which he would wish cancelled or modified, I have not felt myself in a capacity, if even warranted, to venture on any such alterations.—I trust he will accept this friendly explanation, if indeed explanation was at all necessary.

At the close of the Preface to the first edition of these discourses, I said—"My conscience tells me, in the sight of God, that truth is my object, and truth alone."—In the spirit of this declaration, made with all sincerity, I have desired and endeavoured to keep my mind open to the influence of whatever might be advanced by others in opposition to the views which they contain, on whatever department of the interesting subject of which they treat. Such reviews of the discourses as I have been able to procure I have carefully perused, I trust in this state of mind.—Of these reviews I have selected two, on which to offer a few remarks in the way of self-vindication,—or rather, I should say, of vindication of what I still hold to be the truth of God; my former convictions having been not unshaken merely, but confirmed, by the objections of my opponents. I have selected these two reviews, not because they are the weakest and consequently the most easily met, but because they are the ablest, and because, entering as they do into the marrow of the controversy, the arguments which serve for the refutation of them will be

found, in all probability, equally to meet the objections of others. — The Reviews will be found in the *United Secession Magazine* for October, and in the *Scottish Presbyterian Magazine** for November, of the present year—1843.

The former of these articles contains a very clear and candid abstract of the doctrinal views propounded in the discourses; which, together with the entire review, indicates a mind that both thinks with discriminative clearness, and conveys its thoughts with perspicuity and force. There are but few points on which the sentiments of the reviewer differ from my own; and the remarks I have now to make will, I trust, satisfy himself, as well as convince others, that even in these he comes nearer to me than, acute as he is, he seems to be himself aware, and that the difference between us is more in appearance than in reality.

1. The first point on which I would offer a few brief strictures is—the distinction which, in endeavouring to illustrate the order of the divine decrees, I had made between a *desire* and a *purpose;* my object, in that distinction, having been to show, that, in the order of nature, although there might be a *desire,* there could not be a *purpose* to save, till there was the perception of a way in which salvation could be honourably effected.—"Dr. Wardlaw, we hope," says the reviewer, "will abandon

* Understood to be the Organ of the *Reformed* Presbyterian Body.

his theory in regard to the precedence of atonement to election,—a theory which, we think, is very obviously mistaken,—and which he seems to have had recourse to in order to get rid of a difficulty which did not lie in his way," &c.—Now, although I am not over fond of the imputation of "having recourse to" a theory "in order to get rid of a difficulty," yet, as I am satisfied, from the whole style and tenor of the review, that there is nothing disrespectful intended by it, and far less any reflection on the "simplicity and godly sincerity" of my desire after truth, I pass it without censure.—What I wish him and others to observe is, —that it seems somewhat strange he should express such a hope, when he himself admits, and cannot help admitting, all that I consider worth contending for. His own mode of putting the case will sufficiently evince this:—"God cannot be conceived of as resolving upon ends, without a foresight or discernment of the means by which they may be accomplished; but it does not therefore follow, that he resolves upon the means first, and upon the ends afterwards. In all cases where the discernment of means induces the determination to accomplish a desired end, *two* purposes are concerned,—a purpose in regard to the means, and a purpose in regard to the end which these means are to be employed to accomplish; and these purposes are inclusive the one of the other. To illustrate this. King Darius *desired* most intensely the

deliverance of Daniel from the execution of his own foolish and wicked decree :—but, unable to devise means by which this might be accomplished in consistency with the principles of the Medo-persian law, he could not go so far as to *purpose* it. This is Dr. W.'s own illustration of the distinction between *desire* and *purpose*. Let us, however, conceive that Darius discovered a way of escape for the man of God,—and that that way was by giving up his own son to temporary abasement and suffering for Daniel's sake. The king, IN CONSEQUENCE, resolves on his rescue,—he purposes his deliverance."—Now here, the words which I have marked in small capitals express all I want. The king could not purpose, or resolve, to save Daniel, *until* this way of effecting his deliverance consistently with the principles of the Medo-persian law suggested itself to his mind. The discovery of this method of deliverance was *preceded* by the *desire*, and was *followed* by the *purpose*. The order is — the *desire*, the *discovery*, the *purpose*. The purpose is "*in consequence*" of the discovery. I have no objection to the incorporation into one of the two purposes,—the purpose to deliver, and the purpose to give up his son to suffering in order to the deliverance,—so soon as this mode of delivering has suggested itself to his mind. My position is, that there could be no purpose to save *prior to* the suggestion; and whenever the suggestion presents itself, the king's resolution or pur-

pose is, to carry it into effect *in order to* the deliverance of the prophet; or, which is the same thing, his resolution or purpose is, to deliver the prophet, *in consequence of* the suggestion having presented itself.—And thus in the case of God and his people. There could not, in the divine mind, be a purpose to save, or an election to salvation,—*prior to* the discernment of the means by which the salvation could be honourably bestowed. The means are discerned, and, "*in consequence*," the purpose is formed. By the use of this phrase the reviewer, as I have said, grants me all I ever designed to establish by the distinction between a desire and a purpose.

I am well aware, that when we rise from King Darius to the King of kings, we feel ourselves embarrassed in the use of all the language that expresses *precedence* and *sequence* in regard to the operations of the divine Mind. We know that there is properly no such thing. It is this that has given rise to the distinction between the order of *nature* and the order of *time*. While the latter can have no place in Deity, the former must. And as God himself speaks of his own counsels and doings "after the manner of men," without which we could not have understood him, so neither is it possible for us to "order our speech" otherwise concerning him. It is true that "God does not *first* resolve to save, and *then* resolve upon a Mediator for the purpose; neither does he *first*

appoint a Mediator, and *after that* purpose to save." This is using the phraseology of *time* rather grossly, in order to render the idea of priority and sequence offensive and revolting. But if the reviewer will assent to the proposition—that we cannot imagine God purposing to save, *except as having in his mind* the perception of the means by which the purpose can be effected with honour to himself and to his government, he assents to all that I have any wish to establish:—that the discernment, approval, and adoption, of the appropriate means are necessary *in order to* the purpose. ——I see not, therefore, why the reviewer should wish or hope for my abandoning what he substantially holds along with me.

2. The only other material point of difference between the reviewer and me, will be seen from the following paragraph. Having quoted two or three sentences from the "Strictures" of an "English Congregational Minister,"* concluding with these words—"Nor, again, must it be forgotten, that *if* they" (namely Fuller, Wardlaw, Williams, Payne, Russell, and others) "at any time maintain—which I greatly doubt—that there existed no connexion

* I may take this opportunity of expressing what I meant to have expressed sooner, my high appreciation of these "Strictures;" which, for discriminative acuteness of thought, and clearness and cogency of reasoning, are just what might have been anticipated from the quarter whence they are understood to have come.

between the death of Christ and the salvation of any one, the words are merely intended to state, that his death *alone,—apart from intention and covenant engagements,*—would not have ensured the salvation of any one,"—he proceeds as follows :—"We quote this paragraph, not only to show that our congregational brethren attribute the *certainty* or *security* of the salvation of the elect, to something else than to *the death of Christ, viewed as the fulfilment of the terms of a gracious covenant between him (and in him his people) and his Father,*—but also to show that they oftentimes use *the very same language* which we employ, but in a *different sense.* Were any of *us* to speak of the death of Christ "apart from covenant engagements," he would mean apart from the engagements or stipulations of the "covenant of grace," and we should find no fault with him for doing so ; but the writer before us" (the Author of the "Strictures") "and those of the same school, intend by such phraseology, nothing more than is stated in the beginning of the extract,—"*the purpose to save which accompanied his death.*" They thus substitute a "purpose of application" in room of "the covenant of grace,"—a covenant which we regard as a glorious sovereign arrangement for ensuring pardon and everlasting felicity to countless millions of the guilty and perishing children of men, and *but for which we have no*

reason to suppose that the mission of the Son of God into our world would ever have been undertaken."*

Now on the contents of this paragraph I offer the following brief remarks; and in offering them, my object is to show, that even in regard to those points in which the reviewer avows a difference between him and his school and myself and mine, there is as near an approach as possible to substantial identity of sentiment; that he is one with me where he professes to differ, just as much as where he professes to agree:—that when we "oftentimes use the *very same language*" with himself and friends, the "different sense" is more apparent than real,—more in systematic forms of speech than in essential sentiment. — Observe, then—

First:—There is no doubt, on either side, that when the Mediator was appointed, and the atonement to be made by him was determined upon,—there was a full and explicit settlement of all its results,—of all that was to arise out of it, whether of glory to the divine name, of good to men, or of honour and joy to the Mediator himself. The infinitely wise God cannot be supposed to resolve on any scheme, without a perfect prospective contemplation of all that is to be effected by it.

* The Italics throughout are the reviewer's.

Secondly :—Neither is there, on the one side or on the other, any doubt, that the divine Mediator, in undertaking the commission to assume our nature, and to become the propitiation for our sins, had a perfect assurance given him of these results ;—and that of the results thus ensured to him the eternal salvation of "the elect,"—of "the church,"—of those "given to him of the Father," —was one :—that when he had "made his soul an offering for sin, he should see his seed,"—should "see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied."

Thirdly :—This being granted, it does appear to me that the difference of which the reviewer speaks is more verbal than real.—*We* speak of election consisting, in regard to the atonement, in a "*sovereign purpose of application*." But then, this purpose of application was not an after-thought. It was connected with the appointment of the Mediator ;—so that when his propitiation was determined, the extent of its application was also determined :—it was known to the Mediator : —it was part of the pre-ordained conditions on which he engaged to execute "the work given him to do." Call it a stipulation,—call it a covenant stipulation, if you will, on the part of the Father that sent him : we object not to the phraseology. For really, when all this is admitted, what does the charge of "substituting a purpose of application in room of the covenant

of grace" amount to? Is there any material difference,—is there any difference at all,—between the Mediator's being assured of this sovereign purpose of application, and the salvation of the Elect being one of the "engagements or stipulations of the covenant of grace?"—But still—

Fourthly:—It is to me very obvious, that it is not *the atonement in itself*—that is, the atonement considered apart from the purpose just spoken of,—that *ensures* the salvation of God's chosen.—The reviewer intimates his agreement with me in rejecting the limitation of the atonement either in *sufficiency* or in *destination,*—in regarding it as equally competent for the salvation of one as for that of another,—alike available for the salvation of all. This being the case, it is clear as noon that the difference in respect of the elect cannot be found *in the atonement itself;*—that the ensuring of *their* salvation,—the certainty of the great propitiation actually proving effectual in their case,—must lie in what he denominates the *covenant stipulation,*—the *engagement in the covenant of grace.* But this amounts to the very same thing with the security arising from a sovereign *purpose of application,* when that purpose is understood to have been previously known and fixed,—known and fixed, that is, when the Mediator undertook his commission.—I cannot but think that a mind so acute and discriminative as the reviewer's is must perceive, that unless the limited destination

scheme be adopted, and the atonement be considered as made *for the elect alone*, there is no medium between this and the admission that it is not the atonement itself, but a certain stipulation regarding the atonement, that *ensures the salvation of the Elect*.—But—

Fifthly :—I cannot think it right that the stipulations of the covenant, or the engagements on the part of the Father to the Son, should be confined exclusively to the *salvation of the elect*. There was a purpose on which the incarnate Redeemer, in the days of his flesh, showed how greatly his heart was set;—when he said—"Father, glorify thy name!"—"I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." He was to have the satisfaction and the honour of providing for the glory of the divine Name;—and that, not exclusively in the salvation of the elect,—but in the great general scheme of salvation for all,—the vindication of God's righteousness and the manifestation of God's mercy, in his rectoral character, as the moral Governor of his creatures, who, having shown his justice in the condemnation of men, unites his justice with his grace in providing the Mediator, and proclaiming, in his name, a general amnesty to all who will accept the terms on which it is offered, the terms of unconditional surrender and acknowledgment of his merits and intercession as the sole ground of their acceptance,—thus stretching the sceptre of

reconciliation and love to a rebellious and guilty world.—Of this great general view of the design of the atonement the Bible is full, as well as of the more limited design of it in the actual salvation of his chosen; and the one as well as the other should, we conceive, be regarded as belonging to the stipulations of the covenant. And, since we find our divine Lord himself making pointed reference to both, we have the same reason for applying to the *great general rectoral* design of the atonement, as for applying to its *special sovereign* design, the words which the reviewer uses exclusively of the latter—"*but for which we have no reason to suppose that the mission of the Son of God into our world would ever have been undertaken.*"

On those points on which this able reviewer avows agreement, it were a waste of the reader's time and patience to say a word. They are, in truth, the substantial points of the controversy; and I trust that from the observations which have just been made it will appear, that the agreement is still more complete than the language of the review might lead the reader of it to suppose; the difference, even on the minor points we have been considering, being, as before hinted, more in expression than in meaning.

I cannot say the same respecting the writer of the second of the reviews alluded to,—that in the

Scottish Presbyterian Magazine;—an article which is also, without doubt, the product of an able mind; yet of a mind, I cannot help thinking, of which the perceptions have, on certain points, been somewhat obscured and distorted (however unconsciously) by attachment to a previous system.—To the contents of that article I now proceed.

I am obliged to the reviewer for the terms of kind and friendly approbation of my former labours, in which, at the outset, he expresses himself,—terms which I might bring upon myself the imputation of vanity were I to repeat. But from the manner in which he proceeds to give his opinion on the work under his review, he seems to think its dangerous and pernicious tendencies almost a counterbalance, if not even more, to any benefit which one or other or all of its predecessors may have been the means of effecting. He says: —"It has therefore been with no ordinary pain, that we have found him, in the publication before us, lending the weight of his high name to the dissemination and support of doctrinal views which we should be sorry to think of ever becoming general, and which appear to us to involve, in their nature and tendencies, a *surrender into the hands of the enemy of not an immaterial or unimportant position merely, but the very fortress of the gospel:*"—and a sentence or two after—"However it may be attempted to be shown that certain differences of opinion on this subject are unimportant, it will

be found in the end, we suspect, that the distinctions in question, if fairly carried out, *involve all that is worth contending for in Christianity, as a system which professes to unfold to men the only method of salvation.*"

This is serious work. And, while I cannot suppress my astonishment that such a view should be taken of the points in controversy, neither will I deny that it is "with no ordinary pain" that I have read such a charge from——I was going to say such a quarter: but the writer of what is anonymous, I have, perhaps, no right to surmise. On the supposition, however, that rumour says true, I have felt deeply, not this merely, but a variety of modes of expression throughout the article, indicative of a state of feeling of which I would rather not be the object in such a bosom: —the pain, in these cases, being necessarily proportioned to the degree of affectionate estimation in which we have been accustomed to hold the party from whom the expressions come, and with which we have ever, in all sincerity, spoken of him.—I shall not quote any of the expressions to which I refer:—far less will I gather them together, and place them in juxta-position; because, when so arrayed, the impression made upon the reader's mind is generally stronger than the writer intended, or than they make separately and singly. I shall leave the reader who may fall in with the review, to find them out for himself.—As

for the writer's serious apprehensions about individuals and denominations holding and tolerating such "dangerous heresy," they may be spared at least till the heretical and dangerous character of the doctrines in question has been more satisfactorily made out than by the reasonings of this review.

Of the merits of the work "as a whole" he thus expresses himself:—"In our opinion, Dr. Wardlaw has never written any thing so unworthy of his character as this volume. There are some passages, doubtless, of great beauty and power, but, as a whole, it is desultory, unsatisfactory, feeble. Even as a composition, it strikes us as inferior to his other writings; and as to its matter, it is such as cannot but shake the confidence of the christian public in him, as an accurate thinker, and a sound theologian." —From this general estimate of the work, I am apt to suspect that he thinks me somewhat far gone in a mental consumption, and considers it full time for me to desist from authorship. It may be so. In mental decline, as in corporeal, the patient may not be always sensible of the sinking; so that he may be near his last, when he fancies himself tolerably well. The only consolation one can have, in these circumstances, is, that other doctors, and men of some skill too, don't perceive the symptoms:—and this consolation I do happen to enjoy. From aught that has yet

transpired, so far as it has come under my own cognizance, I have no great reason to apprehend that the "confidence of the christian public" has been seriously shaken (so far, that is, as it ever existed) either in the accuracy of my thinking or the soundness of my theology. The review was meant to shake it; and so meant, I have no doubt, from a love of what the writer believes to be truth. How it will stand in the end, when I have "said my say," the "christian public" must be left to judge.

Were I to enter at length into discussion on all the topics on which the reviewer touches, I should have to transcribe large portions of what I have already written, and to add another volume.—To a great extent I am willing that any reader who is in earnest in his desires after truth on the subject should judge between the contents of the discourses themselves and the objections of the review. A few strictures, however, as brief as I can easily make them, may serve to set these objections in their proper light, and show their true amount of value.

I shall pursue the same method with the reviewer, remarking first on his *objections to my views of the atonement*, and then, secondly, on his *defence of his own*.

I.—i. There is a good deal of the reasoning that is founded on assumptions and inferences for which there exists no ground; and to enter into a detailed

exposure of these would be an irksome and an endless task.—Thus, at the very outset. After quoting various passages, as containing a summary of my views respecting the design of the atonement, he says :—" From this it follows, that the salvation of the elect formed no part of the original purpose respecting the atonement of Christ,—that the purpose to save by the atonement holds a secondary and subordinate place in the mind of God,—and that there is no necessary bond of connexion between atonement and salvation, seeing, although there could not have been salvation without atonement, there might have been atonement without salvation, and, consequently, that the atonement might have not only taken place, but served a most valuable end, had the salvation of a single soul been neither designed nor effected by it." p. 262.—On the sentiment of the latter part of this citation I may offer a remark or two by and by; although perhaps what has been said in the previous part of the preface might suffice. But as to the first part of it, who ever said any thing of the kind,—or any thing in the remotest degree implying it? Did the reviewer imagine that the supposition of no election was anything more than a supposition?—a supposition made merely for the sake of bringing out and impressing certain views of the nature and ends of atonement which we conceived to be too much overlooked? But who ever said,—for who ever thought,—that the ap-

pointment of the atonement was irrespective of the purpose to save!—And if, virtually, it has been said that the purpose to save holds a "secondary and subordinate place in the mind of God," it has only been in a sense in which, it is presumed, the reviewer will not be disposed to question it,—namely, that, how important soever and valuable may be the salvation of man, the glory of God must, among final causes, take precedence of it,—every thing, in creation, in providence, and in redemption, being subservient to this first and highest and most sacred of all ends.—The obvious truth is, that the purpose of salvation was inseparably connected with the purpose of atonement. We never have been so mad as to charge "the only wise God" with doing so vain a thing as the making, or the purposing to make, an atonement, without, at the same time, a purpose of results. What we say is this:—that in appointing atonement, the purpose was twofold,—a *rectoral* and a *sovereign* purpose; the purpose of *providing a ground for offering salvation to mankind generally*, and the more special purpose of *actually effecting the salvation of a limited number of mankind on that ground*.—My full conviction still is, that on the former of these two purposes *too little stress* is by many laid; and that from this has arisen, and continues to arise, a great proportion of the opposition made to the indefinite atonement scheme. Neither the purpose to *offer* salvation, nor the pur-

pose to *effect* salvation, could have place in the divine mind otherwise than in connexion with the atonement; inasmuch as neither the one nor the other could be formed except on a ground honourable to the divine character and government:—but neither, on the other hand, could the purpose of atonement be formed otherwise than in connexion with the purpose of the ends, and of all the ends, which were ultimately to be effected by it.

I have no inclination to contend about words:—"We can understand the distinction," says the reviewer, "between the *rectoral character* and the *sovereign character* of God. Nor have we any difficulty in comprehending what is meant by a *rectoral design* and a *sovereign design*, the former being viewed with reference to God's dealings as moral governor with mankind at large, and the latter with reference to the dispensation of mercy toward the elect. But we cannot so easily see the propriety of speaking of a rectoral design and a sovereign design *in respect to the atonement*. We find nothing in the scriptures to warrant the supposition that God has one purpose to serve by the death of Christ with respect to his righteousness, and another purpose with respect to his mercy. We should prefer, therefore, to speak of the rectoral and sovereign *aspects* of God's one design to effect salvation by means of the atonement." p. 264.—I have said I have no wish to dispute about words. I must express my surprise, how-

ever, at what is here said of "not seeing the propriety of speaking of a rectoral design and a sovereign design *in respect to the atonement*." If the distinction itself is admitted, in the sense here so clearly expressed—"the former being viewed *with reference to God's dealings as Moral Governor with mankind at large*, and the latter *with reference to the dispensation of mercy toward the elect*," —then surely that distinction must have place "*in respect to the atonement*." How can it be otherwise? It is in his *rectoral* capacity that God *offers the amnesty to mankind at large*:—it is in his *sovereign* capacity that he *chooses and saves his elect*. But both are on the ground of the atonement. In determining and making the atonement, therefore, he determined it and made it *for both purposes*; and, since he determined and made it for both purposes, he determined and made it *in both capacities*, — both in his rectoral and in his sovereign character. Was God, in his rectoral character, and in fulfilment of his rectoral design, to make the general offer of pardon to mankind *irrespectively of the atonement*, or of the vindication of his righteousness, and the manifestation of the harmony of righteousness and mercy, by means of the atonement? These things were evidently as necessary to his acting honourably to himself in his *rectoral* as in his *sovereign* capacity. I can conceive no good end, indeed, to be answered by the distinction, of which the reviewer expresses

his preference, between the different *aspects* of the atonement. He says—"it is more accurate to represent the rectoral aspect as having a regard to *God*, and the sovereign a regard to *men*." Now to me it is evident, that in each of the two —the rectoral and the sovereign—there is *a regard to both*. It is clear that God must be glorified in the exercise of his sovereign beneficence, as well as in the conduct of his general moral administration; and therefore in the former, or sovereign aspect, there is a regard to *God* as well as to *men*:—and it is equally clear, that in the latter,—or "rectoral aspect"—there is a regard to *men*, as well as to *God*, although the regard is not precisely the same in kind.—If in each, then, there is a regard to both *God* and *men*, it cannot be a correct distinction between them, that the one has regard to men and the other to God. The evidently correct distinction, on such a subject, is that between *men generally* and *some men specially*.

The writer professes, still further, his inability to comprehend what is meant, or can be meant, by *rectoral love*, as distinguished from *sovereign love*,—conceiving, and conceiving justly, that "*love* and *rectitude* belong to different categories in the philosophy of Ethics."—Neither here would I contend about words. Yet if he has "no difficulty in understanding the distinction between the *rectoral character* and the *sovereign character* of

God," I see not why he should have been greatly at a loss to comprehend the meaning of the other phrases. By rectoral love I mean the love exercised by God in his rectoral character; and by sovereign love, the love exercised by God in his sovereign character. The former, therefore, signifies that general benevolence which regards men as his rational creatures, and the subjects of his moral government;—the latter, whatever peculiar affection he may entertain and manifest towards any of these his creatures and subjects beyond the rest, in the gracious bestowment of special favours. It will not, I presume, be questioned, that there is such a thing as this general benevolence on the part of God towards mankind at large, or that this benevolence is exercised by him in his rectoral as well as in his providential character,—in the administration of his moral government as well as of his superintending providence. And if the thing itself be admitted, I shall not contend about the designation used to express it, although, in the connexion and antithesis in which it stands, I still think that designation sufficiently appropriate and intelligible. And I conceive the "rectoral love" to be manifested in the provision of the atonement as a universal remedy, and the free offer of pardon and salvation to men as sinners on the ground of it; while the "sovereign love" is exercised in the special work of grace by which, on the same ground, individual

sinners are converted and saved.—"We hold," says the reviewer, "as firmly as those we are opposing do, that the atonement has a double aspect. But we object to its being represented as having a double design, or even to its rectoral aspect having a respect to *all* men, and its sovereign a respect to *some:*—in other words, we object to its being held as in one view universal, and in another particular. The one aspect we prefer to regard as bearing on the character of God, viewed as a moral Governor, the other as bearing on men, viewed as the objects of sovereign mercy. And the conditions in the death of Christ which correspond to these respective aspects, are not, that in the one view he died for all, and in the other for some,—that is to say, that the atonement was both general and special, both definite and indefinite; but, on the one hand, that it possessed an infinite intrinsic worth or character of all-sufficiency, in consequence of which it was qualified to sustain the rectoral honour of the Deity; and, on the other hand, that it was accompanied with a definite destination in the purpose or intention of the divine mind, gloriously illustrative of the sovereign mercy of the Supreme Being." p. 265.—But why is this? Why is the twofold aspect of the atonement to be confined to *God* and *the elect?*—sustaining the rectoral honour of the one, and illustrating his sovereign mercy in the salvation of the other.—Has the atonement *no aspect whatever*

towards mankind,—towards *the world?* And if it has, is it not necessary that, under that aspect, the glory of the divine character and government be kept inviolate? When the reviewer speaks of "sustaining the rectoral honour of the Deity," we naturally ask—*In doing what?*—in what department or step of his procedure? According to his statement, it can only be in extending his sovereign mercy *to the elect;* this being (according to that statement) the only aspect of the atonement as it relates *to men*. Now here is the very "habit of associating the atonement too exclusively with the salvation of the elect," to my intimated apprehension of which he elsewhere refers with a sarcasm so scrimply candid. Why should not the atonement, while it sustained the rectoral honour of God, be regarded as having, at the same time, an aspect *towards men?* Why not say that it "possessed an infinite worth, or character of all-sufficiency, in consequence of which it was *fitted to be a ground on which the offer of salvation might, consistently with the honour and the truth of the divine character, be made to mankind at large?*" I am not sure that the reviewer himself would object to this statement; the all-sufficiency of the atonement being (as we shall afterwards see) the very ground on which he conceives the universality of gospel invitations to rest. And here we are agreed. How far his idea of *limited destination*, when connected with all-sufficiency, does not destroy the validity of this ground, in regard to all except the

elect, we may by and by more particularly inquire. We only notice at present, that while, in this its "infinite intrinsic worth and character of all-sufficiency," it does "bear on the character of God viewed as a Moral Governor," it surely ought to be regarded as, at the same time, *bearing on men viewed as the subjects of his moral government:* — so that in this aspect of it as well as the other, it bears upon both *God* and *men*. If its "character of all-sufficiency" be that in it which fits it to be a valid ground on which to present the offer of salvation to men universally,— then, assuredly, according to the reviewer's own showing, it has, in this its all-sufficiency, *an aspect toward men.* Instead, therefore, of *bearing upon God* in the one aspect of it, and *bearing upon men* in the other, it evidently bears in each upon both; and the following would be a true statement of the case, adopting the phraseology of the reviewer, and adding on each side what is necessary to its completeness: — "The one aspect we prefer to regard as bearing on the character of God viewed as a moral governor, *and on men viewed as the subjects of his government,*— the other as bearing on men viewed as the objects of sovereign mercy, *and on God viewed as a sovereign benefactor freely yet honourably exercising that mercy.*"—When we take this comprehensive view of it, we have both the rectoral and sovereign *design,* and the rectoral and sovereign *love:*—the

rectoral design, in the provision of a ground for the unrestricted invitation of all to pardon and life, —and the *rectoral love* as expressed in this provision,—"God so *loving the world*, as to give his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him might not perish but have everlasting life:"—the *sovereign design* in the purposed salvation of the elect, and the *sovereign love* as expressed in their original choice, and in the gracious effectuation of the purpose of their salvation.—What there is in a statement like this so frightful, so pregnant with heresy and mischief, so subversive of all that is valuable in Christianity, I am greatly at a loss to divine.

2. I proceed to another topic—*the order of the divine decrees*.—On this point I refer to what has already been said in the former part of this preface. If the general principle of what has there been advanced be correctly apprehended, there will be no difficulty in applying it to the reasonings of this any more than to those of the former reviewer.—Believing, as I do, in the doctrine of sovereign, unconditional, personal election to life,—as consisting in the eternal purpose of God to render the atonement effectual, by the influence of his Spirit, to the salvation of a certain number of the fallen race of men,—and having unequivocally avowed this belief, —I feel very easy under any imputation,—how surprised and grieved soever I may be at the imputation being even surmised,—of "limiting the

exercise of the divine sovereignty, or interfering with the high prerogative of Him who says 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.'" There is no less an exercise of the sovereign prerogative of Deity in the limited *application* of the atonement, than there is in its limited *destination*. —Again:—Conceiving, as I do, this purpose of electing love to have gone along with the determination and execution of the atonement, I can admit no force or relevancy whatever in the objection—that my views cannot be shown to "consist with the existence of a special love on the part of the Father in appointing the Son to die, and of a special love on the part of the Son in undertaking to die." — Still further:—If, as I believe, the blessed Saviour undertook to make, and did make, the atonement, with the full knowledge and stipulation of the certain salvation of the chosen number;—and if, as I also believe, he undertook and made the atonement, with the equally understood stipulation that on the ground of it the offer of salvation should be held out to mankind at large,—and that, having made it, he should, in his exalted state, have all spiritual resources and influences placed at his disposal, and "all power in heaven and earth" committed to him, to enable him to give it its actually saving efficacy,—I am at a loss to know what more can be requisite to my being able "to show how Christ

can with propriety be called the Saviour of men." —"On the supposition in question," it is alleged, (the supposition, namely, of the priority of atonement to election in the purpose of God) "it is not the atonement that saves, but the grace of God applying the atonement." Does the atonement, then, save, independently of the grace of God applying it? The question may be answered by another—Are the elect in a state of salvation, previously to the grace of God applying the atonement? Are they not, on the contrary, described as being, before that time, "children of wrath even as others?" Even were the *limited destination* scheme admitted, and the atonement regarded as for *the elect alone*, I see not in what other sense it can be said to have saved them, than as providing the ground of their salvation, and ensuring their having salvation on that ground. It does not actually save them. So far, then, as the elect are concerned, the amount of the difference between that scheme and the *limited application* scheme, is no more than this,—that, both holding the *ground* of their salvation to be provided in the atonement, the one maintains the *security* of their salvation to lie in the atonement itself, as having been made, in the way of legal satisfaction, for them alone,—while according to the other, this security arises from their having been the subjects of a special purpose, stipulation, or engagement, inseparably connected with the appointing and the

making of the atonement, that the grace of God should, in their case, apply that atonement effectually to their salvation, bringing them to the knowledge and the faith of it for their pardon and sanctification. Such is the difference. And this last is the *monstrum horrendum,* the worse than Socinian heresy, from which this writer, with a sensitive dread, recoils,—a dread which I must and do believe to be sincere; but the very sincerity of which is my greatest wonder.

If in the strictures of the present reviewer, on the point now under consideration, there is any material addition to those of the former, it may be given, in substance, in a sentence or two: —"The reason assigned for this arrangement of the divine decrees involves a palpable contradiction. The reason is, that there may be a meritorious ground on which the purpose of election may rest. The righteousness of God being vindicated by the atonement, a way is opened up on which the purpose of God to save men may proceed. The righteousness of God is thus supposed to be vindicated, in the order of nature, prior to the purpose of saving sinners by the atonement being formed, and prior, of course, to Christ's being regarded as the substitute of sinners. We insist not now on its being the purpose to save that renders the vindication of the divine righteousness necessary, and consequently on the impossibility of atonement preceding the purpose of election; but what we

wish to remark is, that, supposing the atonement to precede, it was not possible, in that case, that it could ever vindicate divine justice. For what Christ did, could not be viewed as done by him in the capacity of substitute for sinners, such substitution being impossible before they were chosen." p. 266.

On this representation two remarks may suffice. In the *first place*, it evidently proceeds on the assumption that, in order to the vindication of the divine justice in the forgiveness of the guilty, there was necessary such a description of substitution and suretyship as excluded all but the actually pardoned from any interest in the atonement;—the assumption, that to vindicate divine justice, the substitutionary penalty behoved to be strictly and solely the penalty due to those represented by the substitute, meaning by them the elect alone;—which amounts to the same thing with saying, that in order to divine justice being vindicated by the atonement in the pardon of sin, it was necessary that the atonement should have a limited destination, and include none but the elect or the actually forgiven. And what is this but a begging of the question,—the assumption of the very point in dispute? Let the passage quoted be re-perused and analysed; and this will be the more clearly perceived. It is both its spirit and its letter. The very last clause is enough to show this:—"such substitution being impossible *before they were chosen*." These

words imply that the substitution was for *the elect alone ;*—that the atonement made by the substitute was for *the elect alone ;*—that the vindication of divine justice by that atonement was for *the elect alone ;* —and consequently, that pardon was impossible, in consistency with the claims of justice, save for *the elect alone*.—All this, I repeat, is nothing more than *petitio principii*.——But, in the *second* place, My former objection stands in all its force. Even supposing substitution in the very strictest sense, and the atonement, by limited destination, appointed and made for the elect alone,—there could not be a purpose to save, nor a choice to salvation, without its being first seen that by such substitution sinners could be saved with honour to God. We might adopt the reviewer's own style, and place our objection thus :—"The purpose of saving sinners is thus supposed to be formed, and the choice of sinners to salvation to be actually made, *prior to* its being ascertained whether their salvation can be effected in a way honourable to the character and government of God."—It is surely sufficiently simple and clear, that were any distinction of *time* at all conceivable in the processes of the divine mind, the order of these processes would be as I have before stated it ;—the desire of benevolence, under the form of mercy, to save the lost,—the exercise of wisdom in the invention of a method by which this desire might be honourably gratified,—and the purpose, or reso-

lution, to save by this method. The desire, the plan, the purpose, the execution, is the manifest *order of nature;* although in the mind of the Infinite all is necessarily synchronous. — Surely, then, this esteemed fellow-servant forgot himself, and allowed his zeal to outrun his charity, when, in regard to the indefensibleness of their position as respects the relation of the atonement to the character of the divine Being, he ranked those who hold the views advocated in the discourses below even Socinians themselves. All that he has written to this effect might well have been spared. The idea of the innocent Mediator suffering "irrespectively of every consideration of guilt" — "apart from all reference to guilt," &c., he surely ought to have known, we utterly disclaim; the sole question being, whether the imputation of sin, which was the cause of the Saviour's sufferings, was necessarily of that strict and exclusive kind which the limited destination scheme assumes,—according to which the sins of the Elect, and their sins alone, were borne and atoned for by him in his death. Because *we* hold it to have been more general and indefinite, and believe that this view secures the glory of God more fully and extensively, both in the offer of salvation to all and in the actual salvation of the elect, ought we to be branded as entertaining a view which "involves a monstrous violation of the sacred principle of justice, by supposing that to take place which amounts to as

flagrant an act of injustice as it is possible to conceive?"—Socinians have never reprobated the doctrine of atonement itself in severer terms than these. I do not ask, is this kind? We want no kindness, if we are thus dishonouring God. I ask—is it fair?—is it just?—The guilt for which the Redeemer suffers is not, either according to the reviewer's own scheme or to ours, real and personal, but imputed,—not his own guilt, but the guilt of others. And the only satisfactory ground on which the Socinian objection, drawn from the alleged injustice involved in the innocent suffering for the guilty, can be met, consists mainly in the two considerations—the voluntary character of the sufferings, as endured by one who had the perfect right of self-disposal,—and the glorious nature of the ends answered by them in the moral government of God,—especially, the union of the dictates of mercy and the claims of righteousness in the salvation of a perishing world! These considerations,—the latter at least,—we conceive to have place on our scheme, even with more decisive force than on the other:—and therefore we deem it the very opposite of either just or fair that an imputation so gross should be thrown upon us. We regard it as an outrage on all candour,—for which, however, we find an apology in the sincerity of what we believe to be mistaken zeal.

On the subject of the order of the divine purposes, the objection naturally falls to be mentioned

which is brought against my statement as to the *rectoral character of God standing first in order* in the objects provided for by the atonement. Here the reviewer differs; conceiving that in the atonement, as *a scheme of mercy*, "the display of his *sovereignty* had the first place." But there is in reality little if any difference between us. The apparent difference turns entirely on the particular sense affixed to the word *first*. The display of sovereign mercy, I grant, was first in one sense, while the display of righteousness, or of the attributes of God's rectoral character, was first in another. Sovereign mercy was first, as being that *in order to which*, as manifested both in the offer and the bestowment of salvation, the divine righteousness was vindicated and magnified in the atonement;—and the divine righteousness, the prime attribute of rectoral character, was first, as being that of which the honour required to be secured *in order to* the extension of mercy.

And one thing more I must notice, before passing from this particular;—namely, the scornful but strangely inconsistent ridicule with which the reviewer treats my distinction between a *desire* and a *purpose*;—holding me up as specially vain of it, as "introducing it with much parade, and announcing it with an air of triumph,"—"cheerfully awarding me the full merit of originality" in it,—and pronouncing it "as worthless and powerless as it is original:"——and, after all this, *agreeing with me!*—

like the former reviewer, *granting me all I want!* —True, it does not look very like agreement, when he says:—"In the case of the Infinite Mind, that a distinction should exist between a desire and a purpose,—that is to say, that a desire may exist without a purpose,—appears utterly impossible. The very supposition savours of blasphemy; and we can conceive of so pious a writer as Dr. Wardlaw ever entertaining such an idea, only upon the principle of his feeling himself hardly pressed for means to defend the false position he had assumed." p. 270.—Observe here—1. Two things are, in this sentence, represented as identical, which we cannot admit to be the same,—namely, the existence in the divine mind of *a distinction between a desire and a purpose*, and the existence in the divine mind of *a desire without a purpose*.—It is quite obvious, that although it were unconditionally granted that in the divine mind there cannot be a desire without a purpose,—that whatever God desires he purposes; that would not at all affect the distinction between purpose and desire. But even here, if I mistake not, there is room for exception. Every thing relating to the mind of God is so very far above us, that we ever require to think and speak of it with cautious reverence. The following general remark, however, may, I think, be safely ventured:—and it bears directly on one of the leading difficulties of the present controversy. If by *a desire* be meant a desire to effect any defi-

nite object, there cannot be in that mind a desire without a purpose;—inasmuch as it would be blasphemy indeed to suppose the divine Being at a loss for resources to effect any thing which he desires to effect. In this sense, whatever God desires he both purposes and accomplishes. But that there may exist in the divine mind a general desire after a general object, of which it seems good to his infinite wisdom, for reasons inscrutable by us, to restrict the positive effectuation, we have matter-of-fact evidence. When by divine power creation was brought into existence, few if any will deny that the act of power was, at the same time, one of benevolence; that the object of *divine desire* in the creation of the universe was the happiness of the universe created. Yet we know, in point of fact, that it has not been the *purpose* of God that *all* his creatures should be ultimately happy. He did not interpose to prevent sin, and the consequences of sin,—either as to angels or as to men.—I am not about to enter into any discussion of the mystery involved in the origin of evil, or to add another to the fruitless attempts which have been made to solve it:—the simple fact being enough for my present purpose; that God, though in the benevolence of his nature desiring the happiness of his creatures, did not so arrange the original constitution of things as to prevent it.—Now, that which had place in the scheme of creation may have place also in the scheme of redemption.

On the same principle, there may, in the latter case, be supposed in the mind of God a *general desire* of the salvation of the world,—a desire inseparable from his benevolence,—whilst yet, for secret reasons of his own, all in perfect congruity doubtless with every attribute of his character, he has *purposed* the actual effectuation of that desire only to a limited extent. Just as, although desiring and intending happiness, he did not, in bringing into existence the universe of intelligent creatures, so constitute their natures as to ensure the *prevention* of evil; so, in regard to the remedial scheme which for our fallen world has been provided by him, although also desiring and intending happiness, he has not seen meet so to constitute its provisions, as that it should entirely and permanently effect the *removal* of evil. Thus, while in one sense there *cannot* be a desire in the divine mind without a purpose, in another sense, it would appear, there may. The same distinction which is here made in regard to the word *desire* is equally applicable to the word *will*:—and without some such distinction, it will not be easy to harmonize the language of God to sinners in gospel invitations and assurances with the secret purposes of his mind.—2. There appear to be two grounds on which the charge of an approach to blasphemy is rested; the one, the supposition of a desire in the divine mind which remains without purposed and actual effectuation:—the other, the representa-

tion of one thing in the divine mind having precedence to another.—What has been said may suffice for the former. With regard to the latter—the antecedence of desire to purpose,—are we, I would ask, to abandon entirely the distinction between the order of nature and the order of time? *Must* not that which God purposes be something which He desires? and, in the order of nature, *must* not the desire precede the purpose? Putting time out of the question, would it not involve a contradiction, in the very nature of things, to suppose any other order than that of *desire preceding purpose?* How is it possible for us to conceive of God in any other way than as purposing what he first desires, not desiring what he first purposes?—3. Does the blessed God blaspheme himself, when he is pleased, as he so very often is, to speak of himself after the manner of men? How could he be understood by us, were he to speak of himself otherwise? Far be it, that I should either think or speak or write of the Infinite One in any other spirit, or in any other terms, than those of "reverence and godly fear!" I have carefully guarded against every conception of lapse of time between desire and purpose in his mind. And, when this has been done, it can hardly even be said to be speaking of him after the manner of men, to represent desire as preceding purpose,—inasmuch as it is impossible to imagine it otherwise in any intelligent nature, created or uncreated.—4. The reviewer, I have said, grants me all I want. Here

is the proof. He immediately afterwards says:—"When Dr. Wardlaw speaks of it as impossible to suppose God to purpose salvation without the discernment of a way in which the salvation may be honourably effected, *we perfectly agree with him.*" p. 270. This is enough. I ask no more. It is all I have contended for. It alters not the case in the least when he adds—"but then he states what is not at all to his purpose, as those who place election in the order of nature before the appointment of the atonement, hold that the perception of the medium of salvation was co-existent with the choice of those who are to be saved, that is to say, that they were chosen in Christ Jesus." This, I say, alters not the case, but confirms it. Here we have, after all, one thing represented as *before* another in the divine mind: but being on the writer's own side of the question, there is of course no blasphemy in the representation.—And further, who denies that "the perception of the medium of salvation was co-existent with the choice of those who are to be saved?" If "the discernment of a way in which the salvation could be honourably effected" was necessary to the formation of the purpose to save,—I ask no more:—the same thing being self-evidently true of "the choice of those who are to be saved."

I must leave the remainder of his reasoning to the reader's own judgment, and pass to a subject of primary importance, but one on which it will not be necessary to dwell very much at large:—

3. "The theory under consideration," the reviewer alleges, "lies open to objection on the ground of its supposing that the atonement might have existed, and might have served a valuable purpose had there been no such thing as salvation at all."—I shrink not from admitting that "this follows as a natural consequence from the positions already discussed."—I have before adverted to the reason of my at all making the supposition of a scheme of atonement *without election*. It is of course a supposition only; and in some respects, I grant, it is a *suppositio non supponenda;* as, indeed, every supposition is of God's having acted otherwise than he has done. I cannot but think, however, when persons are so much startled and horrified by the making of such a supposition, even when it is made merely for the sake of illustrating a principle, that there must be a lingering impression upon their minds, as if the *sole* result of the atonement in which God is glorified were the *salvation of the elect;* and that, apart from this, there could have been nothing arising from it glorifying to his name.—I am well aware,—(when and where did the reviewer ever find a word of mine expressing or implying any thing else?)—that the *righteousness* of the divine character and government would have been glorified in the universal condemnation and perdition of every member of the human family;—that they would all have perished justly as transgressors of the law;—that there was no need

for any atonement to render God just in punishing, —the great design of the atonement having been to render God just in *not* punishing. But the indignant treatment of the mere supposition, as so utterly "monstrous and self-contradictory," evidently proceeds on the assumption that there could have been no manifestation of *mercy*,—no glory to the divine *benevolence* and *grace* in the atonement, *independently of absolute personal election* and *insured salvation*. It is here that I demur. My object, in making the "monstrous" supposition, was simply to show, that, *had* there been a scheme of atonement *without election*,—had the scheme been one solely of *provision* and *offer*, on the part of God, to sinners of mankind, there would, without question, in such a scheme, have been *a display of mercy;* and *the entire blame of its failure would have lain with men*. I freely confess, the reading of this review has rendered me more solicitous than ever to press this upon the consideration of my fellow-christians. I have urged it in the discourses: I would urge it still more. Is not his *mercy* as well as his justice glorified, in the case of all to whom he can say, "I called, and ye refused; I stretched out my hands, and no man regarded?" Was it not mercy that called, and mercy that was refused?—If so,—then, on the supposition of there having been no election, that which is the case with regard to these, would have been the case with regard to a larger number,—with regard to *all*.

Is there, then, a *cessation of mercy*, when we make this supposition? Clearly not. It would only have been the refusal of the mercy *by all*, instead of the refusal of it by *some*, or by *most*. I am infinitely far from denying its having been a vast addition to the glory of mercy in the scheme of atonement, that the eternal salvation of a countless multitude, on the ground of it, was secured; nay, I admit that this is the greatest of mercy's displays, in so far as the results of the scheme are concerned.—But still, it appears to me a very false conception, that there is no manifestation of mercy in the provision itself of a ground of pardon, and the offer itself of pardon on that ground, unless there be the further provision of means for insuring the acceptance of the pardon.—Suppose the atonement itself made and revealed, and on the ground of it pardon proclaimed to all who would accept of it on that ground: —did there exist, on the part of any of the children of men, a claim for more? any right to the message of mercy being rendered effectual in their case by divine influence? The idea is absurd.—I grant that there is something awful and revolting in the supposition of a scheme of salvation, and an offer of salvation,—and all, notwithstanding, becoming the victims of perdition. Yet if all the blame of such a result would have lain with the creature, —if, in every instance, the rejection of the offered mercy would have arisen from moral and criminal causes,—and if God was under no obligation what-

ever to go further than the provision and the offer, —these being themselves, at the same time, the result and expression of free mercy;—then must I still contend, that ends would have been answered in regard to the glory of God,—the glory of both his righteousness and mercy,—even had all perished; the shame and the blame lying, alone and for ever, with the "stubborn and rebellious race," whom neither could authority control, nor love and grace reclaim!

I am alike grieved and surprised at the "revolting conclusions"—conclusions well meriting the designation certainly,—which the writer proceeds to draw from my harmless supposition;—conclusions from which he could not but know my whole soul recoiled with a loathing not less intense than his own. But they are *not* conclusions legitimately deducible from my language, even as partially quoted by himself. When he asks—"Was the justice of God so equivocal as to require the death of Christ, in order to vindicate the righteous Judge in inflicting punishment on the wicked?"—had he forgotten my words in the very sentence he had just transcribed—"Would no end worthy of God have been effected, if God himself was vindicated in their perdition, *under every aspect of his character*, —not only as the God of justice (*which he would have been independently of all atonement, and of all provision for man's recovery*) but also, and that most gloriously, as the God of mercy—of mercy

infinite and everlasting?" How could he ask the question, with these words before him?——When he further asks—"Do not these suppositions carry in them a foul reflection on the divine moral government, as defective in the sanctions requisite for sustaining and guarding its honour, and requiring, in order to this, the introduction of a supplementary scheme?"—and when, having asked the question, he adds—"The appointment of a Mediator, in this view, is an act of justice rather than of mercy; and Christ died to increase the condemnation and torment of men, rather than to save them from the wrath to come:"—I feel that I have no light reason to complain of his overlooking the entire object of my supposed case; which is to show that, on the part of God, it would have been an act of grace *to provide the means and make the offer*, even although the offer had not been accepted by a single individual. Is there *no mercy* in his doing this?—no mercy in the provision and the offer, unless there be added *the ensuring of the acceptance?*—Will the reviewer look at the conclusion which inevitably follows from the position he himself thus takes up? If there is no mercy in the provision of the atonement and the offer of pardon, independently of the further provision of the influence necessary to ensure their acceptance,—then unbelievers *are not chargeable with rejecting mercy*. The provision of the special influence ensuring acceptance and salvation, is *confined to the elect;*

and if there is no mercy in the offer, unless the acceptance of the offer is ensured, then mercy cannot be said to be rejected on the part of those by whom the offer is refused.—And still further:—if it be so, that on the supposition of there having been no election, and no guarantee of divine influence to ensure the acceptance of the offered pardon by any, "Christ must have died to increase the condemnation and torment of mankind, rather than to save them from the wrath to come;"—then, as things now stand, the same inference must hold in the case of all those who actually do reject the offered salvation:—that is,—in regard to all but the elect, "Christ died to increase their condemnation and torment, rather than to save them from the wrath to come!"—And how will this accord with all those passages in God's own word, in which, without discrimination, he urges all to accept his offered grace,—to "hear, that their souls may live;"—confirming his word with his oath, that "he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way, and live," and adding the earnest entreaty—"Turn ye, turn ye; for why will ye die?"—"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, for he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon!"—Is there no mercy in these and numberless similar appeals, invitations, and offers, unless there be superadded the

actually converting and saving influence?—no purpose in them but to "increase condemnation and torment?"—I am as far as possible from imputing the admission of such consequences to my opponent. I am fully persuaded that he will repudiate them with abhorrence. But I must implore him, calmly to consider, whether they are not fairly deducible from the premises implied in his over-eager attempt to fasten harsh inferences on the system to which he is opposed.—These inferences he reiterates; and we must reiterate our disclaimer of them. Repetition is not always, in argument any more than in prayer, "vain repetition." It serves to fix the reader's attention to special and leading points.—Who is there that says,—who is there that thinks,—who is there that holds any scheme which implies,—"that justice could inflict penal sufferings on an innocent individual, *without any respect whatever to sin?*" In such language, thus repeated, he shows again that, according to his scheme, the only way in which justice could be duly vindicated is that of the strictly substitutionary character of Christ's sufferings as endured *for the elect alone*,—endured by him as their representative, and theirs only. But we must again urge the vital question—Was it not necessary that justice should be vindicated and glorified in order to the honourable *offer of salvation to all*, as well as in order to the honourable *bestowment of salvation on the elect?* If justice was only vindicated

in behalf of a certain number in whose stead the surety suffered,—then there was no such vindication of justice as could have admitted, consistently with its indispensable claims, of the salvation of a single sinner more! On what ground, in that case, could pardon and salvation be offered to more —be offered to sinners without difference and without exception?—Could it be so offered on any ground that did not vindicate divine justice, and secure its honour? If the vindication of justice be thus confined to the case of the elect,—then, while God was just in justifying the believing, could he also be just in *condemning the unbelieving?* —condemning them, I mean of course, not for their transgressions of the law, but *for their unbelief?* Is it not on account of their refusing a ground on which divine justice would be glorified in their salvation, that divine justice will be glorified in their condemnation? And if there was no ground on which divine justice could have been glorified in their forgiveness, is there any ground on which it can be glorified in their punishment?

I do not at all question the sincerity of the writer, respecting those consequences which he represents as arising from the scheme of general atonement, and which he "cannot regard without shuddering horror:"—but I am perfectly satisfied that he is startled by his own shadow; that with no one of those consequences is the scheme justly

chargeable; that he conjures up apparitions which have no reality; and, recoiling from them himself, frightens others with the exhibition and description of them. Did we see them, we should shudder too:—but they elude our vision:—and, when the truth is presented in its unembarrassed simplicity, they will vanish, we trust, from the view also of any reader whom they may have needlessly alarmed.

II. In the latter part of the article, the reviewer meets objections against his own scheme—the scheme of INFINITE SUFFICIENCY and LIMITED DESTINATION; that is, of an atonement *unlimited in its intrinsic value*, but destined and made *for the elect alone*.

The objection which I have chiefly urged against this theory is, that it renders the salvation of any beyond the number of the elect a *natural impossibility*;—that in this respect, it stands on the same footing, though not precisely on the same account, with the exact equivalent, or limited sufficiency scheme. I have stated the objection thus:—"On the scheme of *exact equivalent*, whence is it that the natural impossibility arises? Whence but from the circumstance, that, the value and sufficiency of the atonement having been limited by the deserts of a certain number, *there was no atonement for the rest?* It is from this,—from there being no atonement for the rest, that

the rest cannot consistently be invited to pardon and to the other blessings of salvation. Now, the very same is the case with the definite destination scheme. *There is no atonement for the rest.* It makes not the slightest difference whence this arises; whether from limited sufficiency or from limited destination. If there be *no atonement* for any beyond the number of the elect, there is the same natural impossibility in the one case as in the other."—I might quote at greater length; but it is unnecessary. Dr. Symington admits the existence of such a natural impossibility to be a fatal objection to the exact equivalent or limited sufficiency scheme—"It leaves no room," he says, "for such an unlimited offer of Christ in the gospel, as to render those who reject him without excuse; for if the atonement of Christ bore an exact proportion, in point of worth, to the sins of those who are actually saved by it, then the salvation of any others was *a natural impossibility;* and no blame could attach to such for neglecting to embrace the proffered boon:—indeed there would be no ground on which such an offer could be made."—Now, I put it to the candour of the reviewer, whether the argument by which I have endeavoured to show that the same objection lies against the limited destination scheme—and which, if fatal to the one, must be equally fatal to the other—has been fairly met by him. The spirit of the argument is this:—Sin that has not been atoned

for cannot be pardoned:—if the atonement was definite, if it was for the elect alone, then all sin beyond that of the elect, is sin for which no atonement has been made,—sin unatoned for:—there exists no ground, therefore, on which it can be pardoned:—and, this being the case, there exists no ground on which a consistent invitation to pardon can rest.—Considering that, when summing up the particulars of agreement and disagreement between the two parties, I had made this the very turning point of the whole controversy, I did expect, and was entitled to expect, that the objection would be fairly and manfully met. I had expressed myself thus:—"The difference, I am persuaded, may all be resolved into one point; for, if that were conceded, it seems to me that no other could well remain. The point to which I refer lies in the answer to the question, WHETHER UNIVERSALITY IN THE ATONEMENT BE NECESSARY TO CONSISTENCY IN UNIVERSALITY OF INVITATION. The propriety and the duty of universal invitation being on both sides assumed, and the practice on both sides actually followed,—is there on both sides, in this practice, the same consistency? The question, observe, is one, not of duty,—for the duty is mutually granted,—but of *consistency between duty and principle.* I cannot refrain from avowing my surprise that on this point there should be a moment's hesitation," &c.

I complain that, on the part of the reviewer,

the force of this objection has been *completely evaded*. It has been evaded, by confounding things which essentially differ,—confounding them in a way that to my mind is most unaccountable. The things which he thus confounds are two descriptions of impossibility;—the impossibility arising from *the absence of a ground of pardon and acceptance for all*,—and the impossibility arising from the *limitation of actual salvation by the purpose of election*.—These are two quite distinct things,—quite different in their character,—and quite independent of each other. The proof and admission of the latter does not, in the smallest degree, affect the former, but leaves it just as it was before. It is to the former, and to the former alone, that our difficulty and inquiry refer. Yet, instead of meeting the difficulty, and answering the inquiry,—what is the course adopted by the reviewer? Why, that of introducing another difficulty, and one of a totally different description, as a *set-off* against this, and challenging me to an explanation of it! I am surprised at this; and yet not surprised:—surprised, that the principal ground of my objection, and the very point in which its force chiefly lay, should hardly have been so much as stated; and yet not surprised, because, had it been fairly stated, I am confident it could not have been fairly met. There is an evident consciousness of this on the reviewer's part. And this has led him, instead of meeting and endeavouring to repel

the objection, or even to mitigate its force, to allege the existence of a difficulty, the same in kind and equal in degree, as lying in the way of my own scheme. And even in doing this, he has been very far from stating the case with fairness. Because I have all along admitted the difficulty, to our limited faculties, connected with election, as it affects the question of divine foreknowledge and human accountableness, he concludes that, after all, it is only a "*choice of difficulties*"—p. 281:—"There *is* difficulty, it seems, after all. We have only a choice of difficulties. Had Dr. Wardlaw been able to remove all difficulty, he might have claimed a triumph; but, as we have only a choice of difficulties, we can see no great room for exultation."—I am not sensible of having manifested any spirit of "exultation," such as to warrant the ungenerous reflection in the closing part of this sentence. There is, assuredly, and can be, no room for it on such a subject; and strangely and presumptuously vain would that mind be of which it was the inmate. But still, I must have been far gone indeed in my mental consumption, if I did not retain perspicacity enough to discern the extreme unfairness (not, I do believe, intentional, but singularly inadvertent) of the representation thus given. When it is said—"We have only a choice of difficulties," the reader immediately concludes, that of these difficulties the one belongs to the reviewer's scheme, and the other to mine; that each scheme

is embarrassed with its own peculiar difficulty, and that the question between them is simply one of balance,—which of the two difficulties preponderates, or whether they may not be fairly considered as at least poising each other. But such is not the true state of the case;—nothing like it. Let the reader bear in mind, that we both believe in *atonement*, and that we both believe in *election*. The difficulty, be it what it may, which arises from the latter, is a difficulty *common to us both*,—to his scheme and to mine alike. I grant this. I have never denied it. But the difficulty arising from the limited destination view of the atonement, is *an additional difficulty altogether*. It is one that belongs to the reviewer's scheme alone. His business was to meet this difficulty, and, if in his power, to solve it. But, instead of doing this, to lay hold of another difficulty, of quite a different description, and one which attached to his own system as well as to mine, and make this a counterpoise to the one with which it was his business to grapple,—was surely an extraordinary oversight, to call it by its gentlest appellation. Could he have cleared his own scale of the difficulty connected with election, and shown that it belonged only to mine,—there might have been some apology for his holding up the balance-beam, and trying to make good an equipoise before the eye of the reader. But the plain truth is, that in my scale there is this one difficulty, while in his there is this and another,—two to one!

But besides this, I am not less surprised at his treating the two difficulties as if they were parallel, —as if they were the same in kind—the same as affecting "the grand objection to a definite atonement, its incompatibility with the universal invitations of the gospel." The ground of this incompatibility I have already stated, as consisting in the absence of atonement for all, and the impossibility of sin being pardoned for which no atonement has been made, and the consequent impossibility of sinners being invited to accept what, with regard to none but the elect, has any existence, or any ground on which it can be bestowed. Now, if this be, as to me it appears to be, an insuperable objection in itself, it evidently cannot be mended by the existence of another. And it is very extraordinary, to see the reviewer evading its force by even *resolving it into the other!* Having quoted my words, that "the only consistent ground for universal invitation is universal atonement,"—instead of manfully facing the objection in its true spirit and force, he proceeds to say—"The consistency or harmony of the offer of the gospel to all *with the prescience and purpose of God respecting the salvation of some,* is confessedly a subject of great difficulty."—No doubt it is. Who ever denied it? But what business had this difficulty here? It is not at all *the* difficulty which I had urged as an objection to his scheme of *limited-destination* atonement. When he asks

"But is the difficulty less on Dr. Wardlaw's scheme than on ours?"—he puts a question respecting a difficulty which is admitted to attach to both schemes, to shun the pressure of another difficulty which attaches only to his own. The question before us is not at all, whether the difficulty arising from "the consistency or harmony of the offer of the gospel to all with the prescience or purpose of God respecting the salvation of some," presses most heavily on his scheme or on mine;—that difficulty being one which may be admitted to press equally upon both, and upon every scheme which includes the doctrine of personal election. The question is, whether an atonement of limited destination,—that is, an atonement for the elect alone,—be consistent or not with the invitation of all to the acceptance of pardon;—which, I repeat, is the same thing with the question—whether it be consistent to invite sinners to the pardon of *unatoned sin;*—and this, again, is the same thing with the question, whether it be consistent to invite to that which, by the limitation of the atonement, is constituted a *natural impossibility*.—Now, the nearest approach which the reviewer makes to a fair facing of this difficulty is in the following passage—p. 284:—"We therefore adhere with unshaken confidence to the doctrine of infinite sufficiency with a definite destination, as really exposed to fewer objections than other schemes, and at the same time serving equally

well every purpose connected with the grace of God in the pardon of sin, and with the sincerity of God in the offer of salvation to all in the gospel. According to this, there is a *sufficient ground of salvation for all*. Had a greater number been to be saved, nothing more than what has been done would have required to be done by Christ. In that case Christ should have stood, while suffering, in the relation of substitutionary representative to a greater number, but his suffering should not have been different from what it was. Now, as a ground of salvation sufficient for all is provided and made known, and as the individuals to whom the atonement is destined are unrevealed, and as a thing that is altogether a secret in the mind of God can have no causal influence in producing unbelief, it follows, that the true reason why any to whom the gospel is proclaimed perish in their sins, is their criminal unbelief. This, we humbly presume, is all that is meant by those who contend that on the scheme of all-sufficiency there is 'no natural impossibility' of any being saved;—not that there is no restriction in the divine intention with regard to the atonement, or that Christ satisfied divine justice for all; but that there is no limitation in the meritorious ground on which the salvation of sinners proceeds. Whether the phrase in question be perfectly unexceptionable, we take not upon us to determine; but we have no hesitation in saying that, *as thus explained*, it expresses a glorious

truth, and furnishes a basis sufficiently ample for the universal call of the gospel, as ample at least as any thing that has been invented for the purpose of supplying its defects."

I have given this passage at length, as containing a statement of what the reviewer conceives a satisfactory removal of the difficulty under our consideration. I beg leave to offer to his own candid consideration, and that of the reader, the following very brief remarks; for of lengthened discussion there is no need:—

1. We are agreed as to the incumbent duty of proclaiming to all the invitations and offers of the gospel, of making its call to salvation universal and without exception:—

2. We are agreed in the sentiment that "the true reason why any to whom the gospel is proclaimed perish in their sins, is their criminal unbelief:"—

3. We are further agreed in the belief that there was all-sufficiency, or infinite sufficiency, in the intrinsic worth of the atonement; so that "had a greater number been to be saved, nothing more than what has been done would have required to be done by Christ."—But here we part company:—for—

4. I confess it to be out of my power to imagine in what consistent sense it can be said that "there is *a sufficient ground of salvation for all*,"—when that ground, namely the atonement of Christ, is

avowedly *not for all*, but only *for some*. How can a ground, with any propriety, be affirmed *sufficient* for all, which is *not at all* for all? If it be so as the reviewer represents, that "had a greater number been to be saved," Christ would only, in that case, although not requiring to suffer more, have "stood in the relation of substitutionary representative to a greater number,"—where is the "sufficient ground" for the salvation of any beyond that number? How can there be a sufficient ground, when there is no ground? And surely, if, as the reviewer affirms, Christ *did not* "*satisfy divine justice for all*," it is little better than words without meaning,—nay, than a plain and palpable contradiction in terms, to allege that there is a "*sufficient ground of salvation for all*." Can that, in any case, be a "sufficient ground of salvation," by which divine justice has not been satisfied?—It will not do to say, that "there is no limitation in the meritorious ground on which the salvation of sinners proceeds." Let the ground in itself be ever so meritorious,—let its merit be even infinite, yet if there is a restriction in it of such a nature as to leave all mankind except the elect *without an atonement*,—without satisfaction to divine justice,—then, to speak of a sufficient ground of salvation for all is mere mockery. There is no such thing. Another atonement would require to be made, before a single sinner more than those comprehended in the destination of that

which has actually been made could be saved. Increase the number as much as you please of those thus comprehended, it makes no difference as to the remainder. Suppose the atonement to have included in its destination all mankind but one individual; that solitary exception, that poor excluded transgressor, would have been without an atonement for his sins,—and therefore without a ground on which he could be saved. His salvation would have been a "*natural impossibility*."—For—

5. When the reviewer says—"This, we humbly presume, is all that is meant by those who contend that on the scheme of all-sufficiency there is 'no natural impossibility' of any being saved; not that there is no restriction in the divine intention with regard to the atonement, or that Christ satisfied divine justice for all; but that there is no limitation in the meritorious ground on which the salvation of sinners proceeds,"—he really might as well have said that they mean nothing by it at all:—inasmuch as, if there is such "restriction in the divine intention with regard to the atonement," or in the "satisfaction made by it to divine justice," as to leave no atonement for any that are out of the pale of that restriction, then is there the same "natural impossibility" in the way of the salvation of all such, as there would have been in the way of the salvation of mankind universally, had no atonement been made at all. The "natural im-

possibility" lies in there being no atonement; and it holds in the case of all for whom there *is* no atonement. It is nothing to the purpose in regard to this point, how important soever in regard to another, that the elect are unknown, and that "a thing that is altogether a secret in the mind of God can have no causal influence in producing unbelief." We grant it; and in its proper place have pleaded for it. But it is not in its proper place here. It is not at all as affecting the principle or cause of unbelief, that we have at present to do with restriction, but as affecting the extent of the actually existing ground for the acceptance and salvation of the guilty. To affirm that there is such restriction in the destination of the atonement itself, as that the sins of the elect alone were expiated by it,—and to affirm, at the same time, that there is "no natural impossibility of any being saved,"—is in effect to affirm that the sins of those for whom there is no atonement may be pardoned without it.

Dr. Symington, we have seen, considers it as a fatal objection to the limited sufficiency scheme, that it places a natural impossibility in the way of the salvation of any besides those to whose sins its expiatory *sufficiency* was limited:—on the same principle I conceive the objection to be fatal to the limited destination scheme, because it places a natural impossibility in the way of the salvation of any besides those to whose sins its expiatory

destination was limited. It is *not for them;* and therefore they *cannot be saved by it*.—This is the point to which the reviewer should have bent the bearing and force of his argument. Neither he nor Dr. S. would have been satisfied with the reasoning of an *exact equivalent* man who, instead of either directly meeting, on some ground or other, the objections to his scheme drawn from the natural impossibility involved in it of salvation beyond a certain extent, or at once granting the impossibility and denying it to be an objection at all, should have started aside to another subject, and challenged the objector to explain the principle of harmony between the prescience and purpose of God and the freedom and accountableness of man. Yet this is something like what the reviewer has himself done in his treatment of the great objection to his own scheme.

That the two impossibilities,—the one from the limited destination of the atonement, and the other from the sovereign purpose of election, should have been placed in the same category, is not more strange in its metaphysical inaccuracy, than it is pregnant with mischievous consequences. Let me suppose—(may I do it without blasphemy?)—that there had been no atonement at all,—none for any of the human race; the consequent impossibility of any being saved; and all, accordingly, perishing:—and let me suppose, on the other hand, an atonement made for all without distinc-

tion; and, on the ground of that atonement, the offer of salvation held out freely to all; and, through the enmity of their carnal minds against God, all refusing it, and none consequently partaking of its saving virtue:—would the reviewer have considered the hindrance in the one case and the hindrance in the other, as in any one point analogous?—the one lying in the want of provision for salvation on the part of God, and the absence of all ground on which it could be bestowed, —and the other lying in the criminal disinclination of sinners to avail themselves of the provision made, and to accept it on the ground revealed? Surely no. In the one case, the preventive would have been, strictly and properly, *natural;* while, in the other, it would have been, as strictly and properly, *moral:* —in the one case, leaving no responsibility, and no guilt; in the other, involving both. Will he, then, deny, that whatever would have been the case as to *all*, on the supposition of there having been no atonement for any, must be the case as to that proportion of mankind to whom, on whatever hypothesis—whether of limited sufficiency or of limited destination—the atonement does not extend, and for whom, therefore, there is really none?

If any thing, on this part of the subject, has surprised me more than another, it is what I have just adverted to,—the manner in which the reviewer speaks of the one preventive and of the other, as if they were in their character identical.

This does appear to me, I confess, neither correct metaphysics nor sound theology:—and I cannot but regard it as involving consequences of no secondary magnitude as to the position in which it places sinners in reference to gospel *offers*, and their responsibility for their acceptance or rejection of them. His object is to show that there is no more *natural impossibility* chargeable on his scheme, than there is chargeable on mine; whereas, as I have already observed, if he succeeded in the proof of natural impossibility in the point on which he attempts to fasten it upon my scheme, it would only be fastening a two-fold impossibility upon his own. But he does *not* succeed. The alleged impossibility in the one case is of a totally different description from that in the other. The manner in which he identifies them may appear from the following sentences:—the passage is somewhat long; but I cannot, with justice to either the reviewer or myself, abridge it:—

"But the friends of the all-sufficient scheme, some of them at least, maintain that their theory removes natural impossibility as well as the other. Without waiting to discuss the propriety or impropriety of the phrase in question, we presume the meaning they attach to it is this, that what Christ did, possesses such a character of infinite worth, that, had it been the mind of God to save others than those whom he has chosen, had his purpose of election embraced a wider range of persons, nothing more

would have required to be done by Christ in order to secure their salvation. Now what more than this does Dr. Wardlaw mean, when he speaks of his scheme involving the natural possibility of all being saved? If any thing more, then he must hold, that the satisfaction given by Christ to the claims of divine justice, was of such a nature as to render it naturally possible for men to be saved *whether God willed their salvation or not*. Christ, according to the hypothesis, has removed all ground of natural impossibility with regard to the salvation of any man, by giving equal satisfaction to the justice of God for all. In the case of some, God wills to remove all moral impossibility also, and hence their salvation follows. But as far as natural impossibility is concerned, the removal of *it* is irrespective of the divine will; that is, it is naturally possible for men to be saved whether God wills their salvation or not. But is it so? can God be compelled to take satisfaction for sinners against his own mind? Is the receiving of satisfaction a thing in which his will is not consulted? If these questions are answered, as we presume they must be, in the negative, then, satisfaction not being independent of the will of God, it follows, that legal satisfaction to divine justice, and a natural possibility of being saved, are not identical, in the sense in which these phrases are understood by Dr. Wardlaw. But if natural possibility and legal satisfaction are not identical, then Christ's having given equal satis-

faction for all does not remove all natural impossibility with regard to the salvation of all. We retort, then, Dr. Wardlaw's objection on himself. It applies with equal force to his own system; and, in as far as he is entitled to claim for his theory the merit of securing the removal of all natural hinderances to salvation, we reckon ourselves fully entitled to present the same claim for our own. But, in any other sense than that in which we have already explained it, namely, that there is a ground of salvation sufficient for all, on the footing of which God, had it so pleased him, might, without exacting more from the Surety, have proceeded to dispense pardon to a greater number of the human family,—in any other sense, we regard it as unwarrantable, on any theory, to talk of a natural possibility of being saved. It is preposterous to speak of there being a possibility of attaining that which God has not purposed the attainment of." pp. 276, 277.

Without entering into much longer detail than such a preface will admit of, it would be impossible to discuss satisfactorily the various points which this extraordinary passage brings before us;—a passage, which lays humbly prostrate the spirit of controversy between man and man, by placing us on delicate and awful ground in regard to the moral administration of God,—ground on which we cannot but be sensible of the abasing influence of the inscrutable mystery of his counsels. I have granted that

the difficulty connected with the doctrine of election, as far as respects the principle of harmony between the purposes of God and the accountableness of man, is a difficulty common to us both. But I am anxious to press it upon the reviewer's mind,—as one who, equally with myself, is desirous to "vindicate the ways of God to man,"—whether the representation of the case contained in what I have now quoted, does not furnish, to a greater extent, *a plea for the sinner*, than *a plea for God*.

The general scope of the passage is to show, that the sovereign purpose of God to effect by the atonement the salvation only of some, constitutes a natural impossibility in the way of the salvation of others. It is true that he uses the phrase "moral impossibility" as well as "natural impossibility:"—but then, from the fact of God's "willing to remove this moral impossibility" only "in the case of some," it is clearly and avowedly inferred that the "natural possibility" of salvation, with regard to the rest, is out of the question;—that it is "unwarrantable," and "preposterous" to speak of such a thing; that it is supposing a "natural possibility of being saved *whether God wills their salvation or not*."—Now—

In the first place,—We have seen that, by Dr. Symington's admission, the existence of a natural impossibility destroys accountableness. He makes this admission distinctly, with regard to the exact equivalent or limited sufficiency scheme of atone-

ment :—"It leaves no room for such an unlimited offer of Christ in the gospel, *as to render those who reject him without excuse;* for if the atonement of Christ bore an exact proportion, in point of worth, to the sins of those who are actually saved by it, then the salvation of any others was a natural impossibility, and *no blame could attach to such for neglecting to embrace the proffered boon;* indeed there could be no ground on which such an offer could be made."—I have formerly endeavoured to show how the limited destination scheme, by confining the atonement to the elect alone, and leaving the rest of mankind without atonement, destroys, equally with the other, the ground on which the boon can be universally offered. But this is not our present subject. According to the reviewer, there is *another* natural impossibility,—that, namely, which arises from the purpose of election. According to him,—if there be any limiting purpose at all, whether in connexion with a definite or a universal atonement, the existence of such a purpose precludes the natural possibility of any but the chosen number being saved; it being "preposterous to speak of the possibility of attaining that which God has not purposed the attainment of." There is one condition only on which he admits it "warrantable to talk of a natural possibility of being saved:" namely, "that there is a ground of salvation sufficient for all, on the footing of which God, had it so pleased him,

might, without exacting more from the surety, have proceeded to dispense pardon to a greater number of the human family." I cannot repeat what has before been said about the inconsistency of representing that as a *sufficient* ground, which is not a ground *at all*,—inasmuch as nothing can to any man be a ground of salvation, that was in no sense *meant for that man*. What I have now to notice is, the proper meaning, when used by one holding the *limited destination* scheme,—of the words "might have proceeded to dispense pardon to a greater number of the human family." They can only have one consistent sense,—namely, that "without exacting more of the surety," God might have *included a greater number in the limiting destination*—or, as the writer himself expresses it, "the purpose of election might have *embraced a wider range of persons*." But this evidently leaves the case, as to the *principle* of it, unaltered. If there be any such impossibility, arising out of the doctrine of election, as is, in any proper sense of the terms, a *natural* impossibility, in distinction from a purely *moral* one—it must follow, that, in regard to all beyond its range, *election precludes accountableness*.—Why, then, thus confound, even in phraseology, things that essentially differ,—and, by out-calvinizing Calvin, furnish the Arminian, whose system the reviewer so much dreads, with such a ground of objection against what we both believe to be a truth of God?

In the second place:—The reviewer proceeds evidently on the assumption that there is *one sense only* in which it can be said of God that he *wills* the salvation of any; the sense, namely, in which it is used regarding *the elect*. He willed the atonement for them; and he willed their salvation on the ground of the atonement; limiting its destination to them alone. This, it seems, is the full extent to which God can be said to have *willed* the salvation of men. But is this in accordance with the plain declarations of his own word? I speak not now of the principle of interpretation; I speak of the simple fact. Many are the passages which might be quoted, as, directly or by implication, teaching a very different lesson. All those passages teach it, in which God ascribes the non-acceptance of his invitations on the part of sinners, and their consequent failing of salvation, not to *his* unwillingness, but to *their own*. Where is there a single example, indeed, of a different description? It is invariably—*I would*, and *ye would not*. The multiplied calls and assurances of gospel grace,—the calls and assurances of the God of salvation to sinners without exception,—might all be here introduced. Varied as they are in expression, this is their universal spirit. To quote were endless.—Is there no sense, then, in which—when he invites, entreats, offers and presses his offer, and even swears it to be *his pleasure* that the wicked should turn from his ways and live,—is there no sense, after all, in

which he wills the salvation of any but the elect? Is it not said of him in so many words, (1 Tim. ii. 4) that he "wills all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth?"—the latter, obviously, in order to the former? The form of expression in the original is the most unlimited possible—*ὁς παντας ἀνθρωπους θελει σωθηναι, κ.τ.λ.* :—not simply *παντας*, but *παντας ἀνθρωπους*, —the same form as when, in the first verse, he enjoins "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings to be made *for all men*"—*ὑπερ πατων ἀνθρωπων*. And if it be said, that the meaning, from the context, is *men of all classes*, this makes no difference, inasmuch as in none of the classes is there any limitation,—so that *all of all classes* are included.—There must surely, then, be a sense in which it may be said with truth that the salvation of men in general is the object of the divine will. We must be safe in saying this,—when He himself says it. In providing a ground of salvation for all, and on that ground offering salvation to all, there is the general *rectoral will* of God, that all should accept the offer,—that "whosoever will should take the water of life freely." From every representation of the case to be found in his word, we are warranted to say, that it is the want of will on the part of sinners themselves, never on the part of God, that is the real cause of any who hear the message of mercy perishing. God wills; but they will not. There must, whether

we can discern it or not, be a principle of harmony between the *general rectoral will* and the *special sovereign will* of God, according to which the former does not interfere with the latter, nor the latter with the former, nor either with the responsibility of man.

3. It was for the sake of placing this matter in what has ever appeared to me its only true light,—not with the presumptuous pretension of removing every difficulty, but with the humble desire of alleviating at least such as do exist, and are common to this with other departments of the divine administration,—that I ventured on the supposition, already so repeatedly adverted to, and which has exposed me to the reviewer's innocuous because most unmerited censure,—of a scheme of atonement *without election*. I am still of opinion, that there is no better way of setting the present subject in a somewhat satisfactory light. Suppose again, then, that such a scheme had been adopted; that an atonement—a universal atonement—had been appointed and made; and that on the ground of that atonement a general amnesty had been offered to mankind, on the sole and simple condition of their accepting it on the specified terms,—as all of grace for the sake of the atoning Mediator:—it would then, beyond doubt, have been the will of God,—his rectoral will,—his will in the capacity of moral governor, manifesting in union the righteousness and the benevolence

of his administration,—that his sinful creatures, his rebellious subjects, for whom the provision had been made, should accept the pardon offered them. Pardon and salvation would have been put in their option; God declaring his willingness to save, and, in the wonderful provision of the means, manifesting the sincerity of the declaration; and the result depending on the willingness of those to whom the offer was made to close with the terms of it. In that case, if sinners perished to whom the tidings of mercy were proclaimed, and the offer of mercy was made, they would have owed their perdition entirely to themselves,—to their own unwillingness to have salvation in the manner and on the conditions proposed,—such a salvation, and on such terms. This unwillingness, springing solely from moral causes, would have been their own blame—entirely their own. The want of *will* would have been on their own part, not on God's;—and "their blood would have been upon their own heads."—Suppose now the purpose of election introduced,—the God of grace, whose unquestionable prerogative it is to "have mercy on whom he will have mercy," determining to put forth, in behalf of some, an influence which shall overcome, in their case, the moral aversion of their hearts and wills to the salvation and the means of it, and in a way, at the same time, that does not interfere with their own conscious freedom of agency: —Suppose this;—does the purpose formed respect-

ing this limited number, and the influence put forth in consequence, alter, in the least degree, the previous position of the rest? Manifestly not. Everything remains, in their case, precisely as before. They continue to be actuated by the same perverse principles,—the same moral alienation of heart from God. They have the same offers,—the same invitations; and, under the sway of these principles, they treat them in the same way. Their perdition is owing, as before, to their own unwillingness to accept the salvation:—and still, as before, "their blood is upon their own heads." The sovereign purpose of divine mercy effectually to save some, makes no more difference in the moral position and righteous accountableness of the rest, than a purpose to annihilate some would have made. All, in regard to them, is as it was. There is the same willingness on the part of God,—the same unwillingness on their part.—May I make a still further supposition? Suppose God to have formed the purpose, and to have put forth the gracious influence,—but to have done it *secretly*,—saying nothing about it,—leaving it to appear, in regard to the saved, as if all were the effect of their own consideration and their own choice,—nothing being revealed, and therefore nothing known, about either influence or purpose,—would there, in that case, have been any difference in regard to the responsibility and guilt of the rest? Clearly not. And the circumstance of its being *revealed* makes

no real alteration, whatever imaginary one it may make through the perverse abuse of it on the part of sinners,—fond as they are of every "flattering unction" they can lay to their consciences. There is no impossibility other than that which has its cause in the enmity of their hearts against God. And although, in one sad sense, that may be called *natural*, yet it is not so in any sense affecting the present argument. It is *moral*,—strictly and entirely moral:—and to treat it, and argue upon it, as if it belonged at all to the same category with the impossibility arising from limited sufficiency or limited destination in the atonement, I cannot but regard as worse than injudicious:—I lament it, on account of the pernicious effect which such a representation is apt to have upon the minds of sinners,—encouraging them in the worst and most specious of all the delusions which their deceitful hearts practise upon them—"If God does not will our salvation, we cannot help it:—we must perish!" Why not tell them that God *does* will it? Does not God himself tell them this, when he represents himself as stretching to them the arms of his inviting mercy, and saying,—"Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways, for WHY WILL YE DIE?"—I take it to be one of the great evils of the limited destination scheme, that it does regard "*natural possibility* and *legal satisfaction* as identical," limiting the former by the latter, and understanding the latter of *such* a satisfaction to the

law's demands as makes the salvation of those on whose behalf it has been given imperative in justice; and that thus it renders it *naturally impossible* that any but those included in the satisfaction should obtain the salvation; precluding, in this way, every sense in which God can be spoken of as *willing* men's salvation, but the one sense in which he willed the legal satisfaction on behalf of the elect, and willed the efficacious grace for bringing them to faith and forgiveness. When the reviewer writes —"the friends of the all-sufficient scheme, some of them at least, maintain that their theory removes natural impossibility as well as the other: —without waiting to discuss the propriety or impropriety of the phrase in question, we presume the meaning they attach to it is this, that what Christ did possesses such a character of infinite worth, that, had it been the mind of God to save others than those whom he has chosen, had his purpose of election embraced a wider range of persons, nothing more would have required to be done by Christ in order to secure their salvation;"—and when, having given this explanation, he asks—"Now, what more than this does Dr. Wardlaw mean, when he speaks of his scheme as involving the natural possibility of all being saved?"—I am at no loss for my answer:—an atonement for all provides a ground for the pardon of all, and in this way renders the salvation of all naturally possible—there being no natural impossibility when

there is adequate provision:—whereas the scheme which limits the "legal satisfaction" to the number included in "the purpose of election," whether that purpose "embraces a wider range of persons" or a narrower, renders it *naturally impossible* that the salvation should extend further.

I feel that it would be altogether intolerable for me, having already dilated so far beyond my original intention, to resume the important discussions, closely connected as they are with this part of my subject, respecting human *ability* and *inability*. When the reviewer says—"Then again, the statement supposes that man has power to believe of himself, whereas 'faith is the gift of God,'"—he gives me a fair opportunity, and holds out a strong temptation. But, as he does not enter at any length into this very interesting part of the controversy, I shall simply refer the reader to the views of it which are presented in the latter part of the fourth Discourse.—The reviewer has not attempted to prove any other want of *power* to believe than what consists in want of *will*. Such a proof would have been something to his purpose in establishing a properly *natural* impossibility. But the success of his attempt to prove it would have been sad and fatal; as it would have released sinners from their responsibility in regard to the reception of the gospel, and cancelled the guilt of their unbelief.

Neither can I afford time or room to enter into

any discussion on another topic,—which yet might seem, from the very strong terms used by the reviewer concerning it, to call for special remark :— I refer to the argument by which I had endeavoured to show that *his* view of the atonement, while it affirms grace in the appointing and the making of it, puts an end to grace in the bestowment of pardon and the other blessings of salvation on account of it. After quoting a few sentences from that argument, he says—"No passage in the whole book has surprised, we shall not say shocked, us more than this. The very objection urged by Socinians against an atonement at all is here brought against the all-sufficiency scheme of the extent of the atonement. We confess it confirms us not a little in the truth and accuracy of our scheme, when we find Dr. Wardlaw having recourse to the armoury of the enemies of the cross for weapons with which to assail us."—p. 276. Gently, good brother. It is well enough known that I am no friend to those enemies of the cross,—further than to wish and pray that they may be brought to the cross for their salvation. But the reviewer should have recollected, and the reader should now recollect, that my argument was not directed against *atonement,* but only against a special view of atonement; that my principal objection to that view was rested on the very same ground on which Dr. Symington rested *his* objection to the limited sufficiency scheme; that my object, in the strictures condemned by the reviewer, was to show that in this

one point especially the two schemes coincided,—the "*legal satisfaction*" of the limited destination scheme corresponding as nearly as possible with the *exact equivalent* of the limited sufficiency scheme,—the satisfaction and the equivalent alike laying God under an obligation of justice to save those for whom they have, respectively, been given, and, at the same time, limiting this obligation to them alone; thus at once putting an end to grace in their salvation, in regard to all that follows the appointing of the atonement and its destination to them,—and putting the bar of the unsatisfied claims of justice—a bar which amounts to a natural impossibility—in the way of the salvation of others. Let it not be forgotten, that it is from such *quid-pro-quo* views of the atonement that Socinians are fond of drawing their objections;—that in pressing their argument they are ever representing the doctrine in such obnoxious lights:—and it may perchance appear to the reader, as it does to me, that instead of being chargeable with "having recourse for weapons to the armoury of the enemies of the cross," I have only been robbing that armoury of a weapon with which it has unwittingly been furnished by some of the friends of the cross.—Had the reviewer kept such considerations in mind, he would not perhaps have referred, as he has done, to my own authority against myself; seeing an objection which is perfectly valid and conclusive on *his* view of the atonement, may have neither validity nor conclusiveness on mine.

A few words with regard to what the reviewer calls my "favourite passage," and I must have done. That passage, to which special reference is made towards the close of his article, is John iii. 16, 17. I admit having referred to it "again and again," and in "a variety of connexions." I might safely leave with my readers the decision betwixt us respecting the general principle on which it ought to be interpreted.—But I do feel the passage to be one of too much importance, to allow any attempt to wrest it from what I believe to be the cause of truth to pass without notice.—The reviewer seems to think that the 17th verse—"God sent not his Son into the world to *condemn* the world, but that the world through him might be *saved*"—ought to settle the point:—because, since "*condemn*" means actual condemnation, "*saved*" must mean actual salvation:—"Condemnation just means condemnation—condemnation itself; the proper antithesis to which is salvation itself,—not the means or possibility of salvation, but actual salvation,—not salvation provided, but salvation enjoyed."—His conclusion is, that "*the world*" must be restricted to those who are actually brought to the enjoyment of salvation. Referring the reader to the arguments in the discourses on the import of the word "*world*" as used by the New Testament writers, which stand untouched by the reviewer, I satisfy myself at present with testing the validity of the

above reasoning as to this text, by applying it to another,—and another from the same gracious lips:—"And if any man hear my words and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world:" John xii. 47.—On this passage, observe—1. The word in the original for "*judge*"—("I *judge* him not" —"I came not to *judge* the world")—is the same with the word in John iii. 17, rendered "*condemn:*" and that here too it means to *judge unfavourably*, or to *condemn*, is clear from its first occurrence,—"If any man hear my words and *believe not*, I judge him not." The judgment of an *unbeliever* is *condemnation*.—2. The two passages are thus rendered as nearly parallel as any two can well be. But my argument does not depend on the precision of the parallelism in regard to the translation of the original verb:—*judge*, in its more general sense, will answer my purpose quite as well. On the reviewer's principle, we should reason thus:—"*Judgment* just means judgment—judgment itself; the proper antithesis to which is *salvation itself*,—not salvation provided, but salvation enjoyed." The text must thus mean, since none but the elect are actually saved,—"I came, not to judge the elect, but to save the elect."—Should the reviewer say (though I cannot imagine he will) well, and why may it not?—the answer is at hand. The previous part of the verse shows, that when Jesus speaks of "judging the world,"—the world

cannot signify the elect, because the very case specified in it is that of an *unbeliever* :—"if any man hear my words and *believe not*, I judge him not;" —and why? because "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world."—Did not the man who "believed not," then, belong to "the world which he came not to judge, but to save?"

Neither can I allow the mere English reader to rest in the assumed correctness of the reviewer's criticism on other words of the original. Our translators have rendered the words—ἵνα πας ὁ πιστευων εἰς αὐτον—"that whosoever believeth on him."—The reviewer says :—"Dr. Wardlaw is disposed to make much of the phrase—"whosoever believeth," as implying that some of those to whom Christ was given should not believe, and consequently, that he must have been given to die for more than the elect. But is not this taking undue advantage of the English Version, which gives to the words a distributive sense, not included in the original?—"the Greek words—ἵνα πας ὁ πιστευων—"that every one believing"—being declarative of the intention of God in giving his Son, rather than expressive of the distribution of the blessings that flow from him."—I am rather surprised that he should hazard his reputation as a Greek scholar on such a criticism. The object of the criticism is plain. It is to render πας ὁ πιστευων of the same extent of comprehensiveness with "the world" in the previous clause. "The

world" is understood as meaning those whom it is God's purpose actually to bring to salvation; this explanation of it (as already noticed) being derived from the end of the 17th verse—"that *the world* through him *might be saved*." On this explanation we have just been commenting. As to the other words now before us, our translators, I apprehend, have rendered them with unexceptionable correctness. They properly and literally mean —"that *every one who* believeth," which is precisely equivalent with "that *whosoever* believeth." To translate them—"that every one, believing" —that is, "that every one included in the world, believing, might not perish," &c.—seems to me an arbitrary violation of Greek idiom. The idiomatic effect of the ὁ is, in this way, completely lost: —and I do not believe that such a rendering can be supported by a single parallel; whereas the examples of πας ὁ meaning "*whosoever*" are every where to be found. The two or three which I select are preferred merely as having reference to the same subject, and expressing a similar sentiment:—John xii. 46. "I am come a light into the world,—that whosoever believeth on me"—ἱνα πας ὁ πιστευων εις εμε— "might not abide in darkness." Does "the world" here mean the elect?—and is the sentiment expressed—that he had come a light to the elect world, that "every one (of that world) believing, might not walk in darkness?"—Acts xiii 39. "And by him all that believe are justified from

all things," &c.—πας ὁ πιστευων δικαιουται—"*every one who* believeth—or *whosoever* believeth—is justified," &c.—Rom. x. 11. "For the Scripture saith, *whosoever* believeth on him"—πας ὁ πιστευων ἐπ' αὐτῳ—"shall not be ashamed."—John vi. 40. "And this is the will of him that sent me, that *every one who* seeth the Son and believeth on him"—ἱνα πας ὁ θεωρων τον υἱον, &c.—"may have everlasting life:"—that is, that *whosoever* seeth the Son," &c.—For other examples of the same thing—which indeed it is almost trifling to quote, so common and so well ascertained and understood is the idiom—I may refer to such passages as Matt. v. 22, 28:—vii. 8:—vii. 26. Luke xiv. 11:—xvi. 18, &c., &c.—I think it, therefore, very unwarrantable to unsettle the confidence of the English reader in the correctness of the rendering of this passage by so unfounded a criticism.—I challenge the production of a single text that will bear it out:—and I challenge, as I have done before, the production of a single text in which "*the world*" signifies the elect. That it sometimes means the mass of mankind that are living without God, as distinguished from the elect, every one knows. How unlikely, then, that it should signify too the elect themselves as distinguished from the mass of ungodly men! I am bold to say that what is thus in itself so unlikely—NEVER IS THE CASE.

This preface has extended far beyond what was anticipated; and, from the manner in which it has been written and sent to press, will be found, I fear, chargeable with the fault of diffuseness. But in such a case, the manner is of less moment, if the matter be correct. The latter of the two reviewers possibly may again complain of "the rambling character of the composition;" but I humbly trust the reader will be pretty well able to judge whether that of which he expresses his doubts be the case or not—whether, namely, I have "any very fixed scheme," —whether "my sentiments be quite matured on the point in question." It is certainly full time they were. Open as I desire ever to be to conviction, I do remain without it in regard to what the reviewer calls the "dangerous errors of my book." I am not obliged to him, assuredly, for the dignified position he has been pleased to assign me, of "endorsing the errors" and "affixing my imprimatur to the spurious dogmas" of certain "upstart youths" and "young aspirants," whose "temerity I should have rebuked" and whose "blunders I should have corrected,"—and of whom he speaks in terms of no measured severity and scorn. That some of those to whom he refers have run into erroneous extremes on more points than one, I regret as deeply as the reviewer can do;—that they have discovered a spirit of dogmatical self-sufficiency at times such as merits no light rebuke, I should speak in insincerity were I to

deny. Yet I cannot think the style of censure which the reviewer has seen fit to adopt calculated either to quell the evil spirit of high-mindedness, or to curb the propensity to extremes, and to hasty and unscriptural crudities. A little sound reasoning in the spirit of love,—the severity, where it may occasionally be demanded, being still the severity of love,—will go further towards these desirable ends, than volumes of contemptuous vilification; — of which, indeed, the tendency can only be to irritate the very feelings it is meant to repress, to inflate the more the swellings of pride, and to provoke to the more unbridled extravagance.—There are parts of the "Discourses" which, the reviewer must be aware, are not in accordance with some of the *ultra*, and, as they appear to me, crude and erroneous notions referred to;—and my influence, so far as it goes, shall not be wanting to contribute to the correction of others. But the general theory of *indefinite atonement* I believe to be the only one that fully and consistently harmonizes with the scheme of truth at large as contained in the divine word. —If, in maintaining that theory, I have gone at all aside from the mind of God, I pray that his enlightening spirit may discover to me my mistake, and dispose me to correct and relinquish it. My motive, consciously sincere, has been, in the matter of man's salvation or perdition, to clear God, and to fix, in every point, the guilt upon the sinner,—to hold God forth in the full and united glory of

his righteousness, his mercy, and his truth,—and to convict the sinner of his being throughout the sole cause and author of his own destruction. If in aught I have erred—may He who has entered within the vail, "not with blood of others but with his own blood," touch and cancel the involuntary error with that "blood of sprinkling!"

Heartily including both reviewers—good and able men, and fellow-servants with myself of the same divine Master,—my fervent prayer is—"Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity!"

R. W.

Barlanerk, 30*th December*, 1843.

PRINCETON

ON THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE ATONEMENT OF CHRIST.

DISCOURSE I.

ATONEMENT.—THE CHRISTIAN ATONEMENT.

HEB. IX. 26.—"BUT NOW ONCE, IN THE END OF THE WORLD, HATH HE APPEARED, TO PUT AWAY SIN BY THE SACRIFICE OF HIMSELF."

WHEN, on the first Lord's day of last month, I announced my intention to deliver a short series of discourses on the nature and extent of the atonement, I had not sufficiently adverted to the somewhat embarrassing predicament in which I was, by this means, placing myself. In the volume, long since published, on the principal points of the Socinian Controversy, there are three discourses relative to this great christian doctrine,—one on its *nature*, one on its *practical tendencies*, and one on *the connexion of our blessed Lord's divinity with its sufficiency and availableness*—and in a more

recent publication I have entered, at some length, into the subject of its *extent*. I have thus, to a considerable degree, forestalled myself. But this essential article of divine truth has, for some time past, in our own part of the Island especially, been engaging not a little the attention of the public mind:—and some of the views respecting it, given in the volumes just referred to, have, "to a certain extent," been publicly charged with "unsoundness." I have felt it, therefore, a duty to myself, and, what is of far higher consequence, a duty to truth, to recur to this subject, and to vindicate the views in question, to the full extent in which I still conceive them to be in harmony with the revealed mind of God.—I have also, I confess, felt a strong desire, to bring as near to an exact balance as possible the amount of difference between recently and still contending parties;—who, on the present as on all occasions, are exceedingly apt, in the warmth of discussion, to hold up each other's sentiments as they appear through the magnifying lenses of controversy, and to condemn and proscribe them in terms of undue and undiscriminating severity.

In what I may lay before you, on the various branches of this interesting subject, it will not, of course, be expected, that I should bind myself down to the entire avoidance of former statements, illustrations, and modes of expression and argument. All that I can promise is, to avail myself of them as little as possible.

I shall enter into no critical discussion of the phrase in the text respecting the *time* of our Lord's appearing,—"*in the end of the world.*" The word translated "world" is not the same with that which has the same rendering in the former part of the same verse,—"for then must he often have suffered *since the foundation of the world.*"* The mere English reader would naturally suppose it to be the same; and would set about puzzling himself with the inquiry, how the period of Christ's manifestation in the flesh came to be called "the end of the world." But the latter of the two original words signifies *ages;* and "the end, or close, of the ages" appears to mean the termination of the Mosaic and previous dispensations of religion; the appearance of the Messiah being the event which was to supersede them all, by the introduction of that to which they were all preparatory, and which was to continue till the end of time.—By some, indeed, from the peculiarity of the Greek term that is here rendered "the *end,*" the proper meaning has been conceived to be the *junction* of the ages, or the period of the close of the one and the commencement of the other,—the point of meeting between them.†

* The one phrase is—ἀπο καταβολῆς κόσμου :—the other—ἐπι τῆ συντελείᾳ τῶν αἰώνων.

† "Schoettgen supposes the term συντελεια to be here used, rather than τελος, by way of marking the junction of the two τελη, or periods. Accordingly, it is well observed by Bengel and Wesley, that

I only remark further, on that portion of the text which does not so immediately belong to my present object, that in the word "*once*" there is emphatically expressed a contrast between the *one* sacrifice of Christ and the *oft-repeated* sacrifices of the old economy:—"Nor yet," says the preceding verse, "that he should offer himself often, as the High Priest entereth into the holy place *every year*," (that is, on the high day of annual atonement) "with blood of others;—for then must he *often* have suffered since the foundation of the world:—but now *once*, in the end of the former dispensations, hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." And the contrast, thus pointedly introduced, is evidently intended to convey and impress the sentiment of the infinite superiority, in value and efficacy, of his sacrifice to those of the ancient priesthood; his being an offering, of which the repetition could not, without impiety, be so much as imagined;—which, from its very nature, was necessarily final;—the idea of any other succeeding it being not less, if not even more revolting than that of the repetition of itself.

But it is to the latter words of the verse, conveying the *design* of our Lord's appearing, or the *nature of his work*, that I am now desirous of

"the sacrifice of Christ divides the whole age or duration of the world into two parts, and extends its virtue backward and forward, from this middle point wherein they meet, to abolish both the guilt and power of sin."—BLOOMFIELD.

fixing your attention. He appeared—"TO PUT AWAY SIN BY THE SACRIFICE OF HIMSELF."—The words clearly express three things:—that he appeared, *to offer a sacrifice*;—that that sacrifice was *himself*;—and that the end for which it was offered was *to put away sin*.—With regard to the latter phrase, it may be noticed, that the noun which is rendered, in effect, "the *putting away** of sin" occurs only once elsewhere in the New Testament,—namely, in the 18th verse of the seventh chapter of this epistle:—"for there is verily *a disannulling* of the commandment going before;" where the import of it is sufficiently manifest,—namely, the *abrogation* of previously existing institutes.—Taking the word, as it occurs in our text, in the same acceptation, some have conceived the sense of the clause before us to be—"the *abolition of sin-offering*,"—a sense which the original word for *sin* is generally admitted to bear. This would doubtless yield a meaning at once just and suitable. But, supposing, as in our version, the ordinary use of the word retained, it is obvious, that the putting away of sin, when represented as effected by a sacrifice, must mean the expiation of its guilt, and the consequent prevention of its penal effects.—I think, therefore, I shall not be far from the true import of the words, if I consider them as expressing the sentiment, that Christ came for the

* Εις ἀθετησιν ἁμαρτιας.

purpose of MAKING, BY THE SACRIFICE OF HIMSELF, AN ATONEMENT FOR SIN.

Without dwelling on the apparently simple etymology of the English term, adopted by some lexicographers, according to which it conveys the idea of two parties, previously at variance, being set *at one* again, *(at-one-ment)*—and, by a sufficiently natural metonymy, that by which the reconciliation or *at-one-ment* is effected,—I satisfy myself with observing, that in the very idea of atonement there are essentially involved *two parties*, —the one *to* whom, and the one *for* whom, the atonement is made.—I have said, it involves essentially *two* parties only, because it may be that the party *for* whom the atonement is required may be able to make it himself. When this is not, or cannot be, the case, there then comes to be included a *third* party,—the mediator between the other two, by whom the atonement is made *to* the one, and *for* the other. I need not say, that such is the state of matters in the case before us. The atonement is made *by* Christ, *to* God, *for* the sinner.

Let us notice, then, for a few moments, the RELATIVE POSITION OF THE PARTIES.

We begin with MAN.—There is a God; and men are his creatures. To this divine Being men sustain the relation, not of dependant creatures alone, but of the subjects of his moral government. By the intimations of conscience, and by the testi-

mony of revelation, they are under a law, and responsible to him for the observance or the breach of it. That law is protected by what is essential to every law, and constitutes the distinction between law and mere advice or counsel, —a penal sanction. With the nature and amount of the penalty we have at present nothing to do.—Placed originally under a representative constitution, in which the first parent of the race was regarded as its federal head, man has fallen from his state of innocence; and the simple affirmation of the word of God that, without difference, "*all have sinned*," is no more than what is established by universal history, and universal consciousness,—in every age, and in every country.—The fall of man did not annull, nor in the slightest degree mitigate, his original responsibility. He remained accountable, and accountable on the terms of the same law;—a law, which, being at first "holy, just, and good,"—a transcript of the moral perfection of the lawgiver,—could not, in any one of its essential principles or requirements, any more than could the nature of the God by whom it was dictated, admit of abrogation or of change. If, on man's becoming a sinner, the law had ceased to be obligatory, or its subject to be accountable, sin and guilt must have been confined to the first act of transgression; no more of the former could have been committed, nor consequently, could any more of the latter have been contracted. "Sin

is the transgression of law;" and all unpardoned sin involves an accumulation of guilt and of liability to punishment.—Further: for the honour of the Lawgiver and his throne, the law provides in one way only:—namely, by its annexed penalty. It makes no provision, nor, from the very nature of law, was it possible it should, either for the forgiveness of its transgressors, or even for any mitigation of their sentence. Man, as the guilty subject of an irrepealable law, has no resource. He lies under his sentence of death,—bound over, by divine justice and truth, to the endurance of it, in all its fearful extent. The unalterable terms of the law are,—on the one hand, "The man that doeth these things shall live by them;"—and, on the other, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

The other party is God.—In all that relates to the subject of our present discussion, he is to be regarded solely in the character and relations of the righteous Governor, Lawgiver, and Judge of the universe. He gave the law to man. As the only Being in existence who was either entitled or competent so to do, he fixed the penalty of its infraction. That infraction was a violation of his rightful authority, and a dishonour to his equitable and benignant administration. He retains his position. The rebellion of a subject left untouched, in all their fulness and force, the rights of his

throne; his demands remaining the same, on the fallen as on the unfallen,—on the guilty as on the innocent.—Having, in righteousness, threatened certain punitive results to disobedience, his veracity binds him to their infliction;—and, these punitive results being neither more nor less than were required by justice, of which it is the province and the characteristic to *render to all their dues*,—that very justice must stand to its claims, and insist on their fulfilment, unless provision can be made for their being consistently and honourably remitted. Justice, in itself, can neither condemn the righteous, nor acquit the wicked; but is, on the contrary, morally bound to condemn the wicked and acquit the righteous:—and, the sentence of condemnation having by Justice been pronounced, there would be a departure from justice in its not being executed; for, in that case, the sinner would *not* have his due.—The honour of the Governor, the dignity and stability of his throne, and the subordination and happiness of his moral empire, all imperatively demand that the authority of his law be maintained inviolate, and that, therefore, the breach of it do not pass with impunity. Justice must maintain the twofold obligation;—the obligation to obedience, and the obligation to suffer for disobedience. Man, the innocent, as the subject of an equitable government, lives; life being due to him according to the constitution under which he has been placed:—man, the sinner, left in the

hands of simple justice, dies; death being due to him by the same constitution,—a constitution divinely framed, on the principles of eternal rectitude.

In these circumstances, what is to be done?—The unconditional absolution of the transgressor would be a flagrant outrage on the claims of retributive justice;—his annihilation, would be a tacit evasion of these claims;—while, if the law has its course, and the demands of justice are satisfied by the infliction of its penalty, he is lost for ever,—everlasting life forfeited, and eternal death endured.

Here, then, is the place for ATONEMENT.—What is it? What is the GENERAL IDEA which ought to be attached to the word? We take this inquiry first; and shall then proceed to the precise nature of that atonement which is actually disclosed to us by the gospel.—"In its simplest form," it has been well said, "the problem of a religion may be expressed thus:—Given a supreme Deity, the Creator and Governor of all things, and an intelligent creature in a state of alienation and estrangement from his Creator; to determine the means whereby a reconciliation may be effected, and the creature restored to the favour and service of his God." * — This assuredly *is* "the problem of a religion" for a sinful and guilty creature; for of a creature so circumstanced it is

* Connexion and Harmony of the Old and New Testaments, &c. By W. L. Alexander—page 71.

with such reconciliation the religion must necessarily begin. There can be nothing worthy of the name, till this is effected. And the great question to be answered, or problem to be solved, is, How may this be accomplished, honourably to the character and the government of the Supreme Ruler? —The sense in which atonement is to be regarded as a *satisfaction* to justice, we shall consider by and by. Meantime, the definition given by another modern writer in high and well-earned reputation, of the theological term *satisfaction*, may be adopted as expressing what, according to him, is the principle, or essence, of *atonement:* It is—"Such act or acts as shall accomplish all the moral purposes which to the infinite wisdom of God appear fit and necessary under a system of rectoral holiness, and which must otherwise have been accomplished by the exercise of retributive justice upon transgressors in their own persons." * — More briefly, the same writer represents atonement as a "compensative resource, by which the salvation of the sinner may be obtained, in consistency with the honours of the divine government." †—Another modern author defines it thus:—"An atonement is any provision introduced into the administration of a government, instead of the infliction of the

* Four Discourses on the sacrifice and priesthood of Jesus Christ, and the atonement and redemption thence accruing, &c. By John Pye Smith, D.D., F.R.S. Note xvi., p. 301. Sec. Ed.

† Ibid., p. 202.

punishment of an offender,—any expedient, that will justify a government in suspending the execution of the threatened penalty,—any consideration that fills the place of punishment, and answers the purposes of government as effectually as the infliction of the penalty on the offender himself would; and thus supplies to the government just, safe, and honourable grounds, for offering and dispensing pardon to the offender."—More concisely —"ATONEMENT is an expedient substituted in the place of the literal infliction of the penalty, so as to supply to the government just and good grounds for dispensing favours to an offender."* —The acute and powerful mind of Andrew Fuller places the matter in the same general light, when he says—"That a way was opened, by the mediation of Christ, for the free and consistent exercise of mercy in all the methods which sovereign Wisdom saw fit to adopt."†—I have myself formerly stated the matter thus:—"The great question, on this momentous subject, comes to be,—IN WHAT MANNER may forgiveness be extended to the guilty, so as to satisfy the claims of infinite justice, and thus to maintain in their full dignity, free from every charge of imperfection or of mutability, the character of the Governor, the rectitude of his ad-

* On the Extent of the Atonement, &c. By Thomas W. Jenkyn, D.D.—page 2.

† Fuller's Gospel its own Witness, &c.—Works, Vol., I., p. 114. Note.

ministration, and the sanction of his law?"*—To the terms of this interrogative statement, I am disposed now to subjoin the following clause—"*and to provide, in the pardoned sinner, for the interests of holiness.*" I make this addition, because it brings the statement into more complete accordance with the representation given by the Apostle Paul of the design of Christ's substitution—"Who gave himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."† If, in these words, we consider "redeeming us from all iniquity" as relating to redemption from it in its guilt, condemnation, and punishment, according to the sense in which he uses the word redemption, when he says elsewhere—"In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins,"—we shall then have in them the two grand ends, ever inseparably united, of our Lord's mediation and substitutionary atonement:—namely, on the one hand, to provide for the honourable extension, on God's part, of pardoning mercy to the sinner; and, on the other, to furnish suitable moral means for engendering, on the sinner's part, holy affections towards God. These are two parts of one design. They are both included in salvation. And they are both alike indispensable

The objective was particular but the effect was all encompassing

* Discourses on the Socinian Controversy—Disc. VII., p. 227. Fifth Edition.

† Tit. ii. 14.

to the glory of the divine Ruler, and to the happiness of his apostate subject. — But I am anticipating.

The more immediate relation of atonement is to the honourable exercise of mercy in the sinner's pardon and acceptance.—If it be asked, why may not mercy go directly to its object?—why may it not follow out its dictates at once?—why may it not confer forgiveness at its pleasure, irrespectively of any such encumbrance as has thus, under different designations, been referred to? in one word, why may it not *pardon without atonement?*—our reply to such questions is twofold. In the first place, they are presumptuous. There is a question which ought ever to take precedence of them,—the question of *fact*. What has God actually seen meet to do, and revealed his having done? If He whose wisdom is infinite has, in point of fact, adopted the plan of atonement, who will have the self-sufficient hardihood to tell him he might have done otherwise? Who will presume to affirm that he has been spending his wisdom in a useless device, and executing a scheme of stupendous magnificence, which might all have been spared? Who will thus venture to test divine wisdom by his own? Must not this inevitably be to "charge God foolishly?" Our first inquiry ought to be, What has God done? And we should rest assured that what he *has* done was what alone he *could* do; inasmuch as it must have appeared in his eyes

the *best* to be done; and with a Being whose knowledge and wisdom are infinite, *best* and *only* are the same thing. He cannot, from a moral necessity, do any thing else than what is best.—And then, *secondly*, although we have not "the eyes of God," to take in, with all-comprehensive glance, the entire bearings of any of his plans, yet, in the present case, he has not left us without such glimpses of the principles on which his plan has been framed, as enable us, in some measure, to discern and vindicate its excellence.—The very definitions which have been given of atonement show this. The principle on which they are all founded is a manifestly reasonable one; namely, that in every step of his procedure, the divine Ruler should provide for the glory of his character and government; so that what is in apparent harmony with one of his perfections, may not be in manifest discordance with another, and that the authority of his law, and the dignity of his government, may not be sunk and weakened in the minds of his intelligent creatures.—It is, I confess, matter of surprise to me, that any good and sound-thinking man should be found treating this view of the atonement with lightness and scorn. The following sentences are from the pen of one who holds the doctrine of a limited atonement. In as far as they relate to that subject, I make no comment upon them at present. I quote them now for one purpose only:—"The prevalent notion at present is, not that by his incar-

nation, sufferings, and death, Christ made atonement for those whose sins he bare in his own body on the tree,—thus cancelling their guilt, and opening a channel through which mercy and love flow to them in perfect consistency with justice; but that the manifestation of the Son of God was designed as a public display, in order to maintain the honour of the divine government. What a view does this give of Him, before whom the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust in the balance! Was God manifest in the flesh? Did the Creator of the world, in our nature, suffer and die, merely to produce an impression upon the minds of rebels, and to prevent his government from sinking into contempt? No: it was that he might be JUST, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus; that he might be faithful and just in forgiving the sins of those whose great Head and Surety, according to his covenant engagements, endured the penalty which they had incurred, and yielded to the law which they had broken the obedience which it demanded." *—The manner in which the two schemes, of limited and universal atonement, affect, respectively, the majesty of the Godhead, here so solemnly appealed to, we shall have occasion hereafter to notice. What I now request you to ob-

* Man's responsibility, the nature and extent of the atonement, and the work of the Holy Spirit, &c. By J. A. Haldane. Pages 110, 111.

serve, is, the lightness with which this writer treats the idea of what he designates a "*public display*." Is it, then, of no importance, provided God *be* just, whether, in the eyes of his intelligent creation, he *appear* just? Is it enough that Jehovah *be* "glorious in holiness," whether the glory of his holiness be or be not manifest to the subjects of his moral administration? Is this a matter of which He himself, in his word, ever speaks in such terms as indicate his not thinking it worth his minding? If it has been worth his while to institute and exercise a moral government at all, it must be worth his while, not only always to act (for how can he do otherwise?) in consistency with its eternal principles, but, in every step, to make that consistency apparent to the rational universe. Of what avail, indeed, can a moral government be,—what reverence can be felt for its dignity, what submission can be yielded to its authority, what complacency can be experienced in its supreme Conductor,—unless provision be made for this? Creatures, it is true, who have alienated themselves from their allegiance, and are "enemies in their minds and by wicked works," may be blind, morally blind, to the glory of such a display. But in that case, their own is the blame: the manifestation has been made; and that is enough, for the vindication of the Governor, and the condemnation of the subject. We shall see, moreover, on a future part of our discussion, that the "*declaration*," or *mani-*

festation, of the divine righteousness in the forgiveness and acceptance of transgressors from the beginning, was, according to inspired testimony, the very purpose of the atonement.—I may remark here, besides, that it is a most unfair and unscriptural representation of the "public display" in question, to identify it with "making an impression on the minds of rebels." Even this it is far from right to treat contemptuously; but to consider the "display" as reaching no further than this, is inconsistent alike with scripture and with reason. How far, in the universe, it may extend, it is not, of course, for us to say: but this much we know, that "unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places is made known, through the Church, the manifold wisdom of God;"—that the angelic hosts—"ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands," celebrate the glories of "the Lamb that was slain," and, through the slain Lamb, of "Him that sitteth upon the throne!"

The very terms which I have thus quoted lead me to our next point of inquiry,—which indeed, in the phraseology used, has been in part, and unavoidably, anticipated:—WHAT IS THE ATONEMENT, WHICH, ACCORDING TO THE CHRISTIAN SCHEME, HAS ACTUALLY BEEN MADE?—And in answer to this inquiry, the entire word of God bears us out in affirming it to have been atonement *by sacrifice*,

—in other words, by *substitution and vicarious suffering*.—Of this the Bible is full. To the mind that can contrive, to its own satisfaction, to strip the Bible of the doctrine of atonement by vicarious suffering, it might, in my apprehension, be safely pronounced impossible to convey a divine discovery at all; there being no terms conceivable which might not, by such a mind, be explained away. SALVATION is THE LESSON of the Bible:—and it is salvation BY ATONEMENT, or SUBSTITUTIONARY SUFFERING.

When man fell, and became a sinner, the God whom he had offended, whose yoke he had guiltily thrown off, whose sentence of death he had incurred, and at whose mercy he lay,—came forward in a new and appropriate character. He made promise of a deliverer from the deadly wrong of which "the Old Serpent" had been the instrument. The terms of the promise were purposely general and obscure, being designed to receive gradual explanation, till their true import came to be clearly disclosed at the time of its fulfilment.—The *mode* in which "the Seed of the woman" was to "crush the head of the Serpent,"—that is, to obtain the victory, and effect the deliverance,—could hardly be said to be contained in the terms of the promise; so obscure is the intimation of his sufferings in the predicted "bruising of his heel,"—a phrase which, even when contrasted with the crushing of the head, could not convey more than the general idea

of his enemy obtaining a temporary advantage, and inflicting a temporary wound.—The institution of animal sacrifice (for its divine original I must here be permitted to assume, every attempt to account for it otherwise having proved an utter failure, founded in no principle of nature or of reason) was, apparently, the first additional light thrown upon this great truth. I keep at present by the inspired record. Amongst the earliest of its brief annals, we find the divine acceptance of Abel's sacrifice, and the rejection of Cain's. Why was this? Why were the struggles and pains of a bleeding lamb (nature's very emblem of harmlessness and innocency) and the consumption of its carcase by fire, pleasing to the God of infinite benevolence, while to the equally natural offering—in some respects, indeed, according to our apprehensions, even much more natural—of the "fruits of the ground" he "had not respect,"—withholding, whatever that was, the sign of his satisfaction and acceptance? The difference is at once accounted for by the consideration (nor does it seem capable of being at all accounted for otherwise) that Abel's was the offering specially appointed for the *sinner*,—the type of the future propitiation,—in the presentation of which, at the altar, guilt was confessed, merited wrath deprecated, and mercy, through the atonement, implored. And this accords exactly with the inspired explanation of the matter in the epistle to the Hebrews—"*By faith* Abel offered unto God

a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." Cain was the first Deist,—bringing the offering by which he acknowledged Jehovah as the God of nature and providence, but withholding that by which the God of nature and providence required to be acknowledged as the God of grace.—And what presents itself thus early in the history of the world before the flood, meets us still earlier after it. Instantly on his stepping from the ark, the second father of mankind rears his altar;—slays and burns his propitiatory victims:—and Jehovah smells the savour of rest, gives his promise of blessing, and bends on the cloud the beauteous bow of his covenant.—The Mosaic dispensation, in which previous types were embodied, and new ones perhaps introduced, was a system of prefiguration, in which the same great truth was signally prominent, its fundamental maxim being, that "without shedding of blood there was no remission;"—a system, full of divine wisdom when thus understood, but a satire on that wisdom in every other view that can be taken of it.—The prophets confirm and illustrate the lesson of the Law. "The testimony of Jesus was the spirit of prophecy." "To him gave all the prophets witness, that, through his name, whosoever believeth on him should receive the remission of sins." And that remission, in harmony with the figures of the law, was, according to these "holy men of God," to be through the sufferings of a substitutionary mediator. Remark-

able to this effect is the language of Isaiah, (chap. liii.) more like that of history than that of prediction:—"All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way: and Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all:"—"he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and by his stripes we are healed:"—"he is cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was he stricken:"—"it pleased Jehovah to bruise him; he hath put him to grief; when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied:—by his knowledge (by the knowledge of himself) shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities." No terms can be plainer than these. And they are in full harmony with those of Daniel (chap. ix.):—"Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sin, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and the prophecy, and to anoint the most holy:—And after threescore and two weeks, shall Messiah be cut off; but not for himself"—that is, for no offence of his own:——"And he shall confirm the covenant with many for

one week; and in the midst of the week, he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease."—I have given our received translation of these remarkable passages. I am satisfied that in some parts of them the phraseology might with fairness be rendered still more appropriately to our present purpose. But they are sufficiently appropriate as they stand. The substance of the latter is thus given, I think most justly, by an eminent modern critic: "It declares that the sacrifices and offerings once instituted by God should be abolished; that the Messiah should be given up to an untimely and violent death, though no personal demerit could be charged upon him; and that, by this great measure in the government and grace of God, a true propitiation and an everlasting righteousness should be established."*—According to the prophets, the promised deliverer was to be a priest,—"a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec;" and a priest, as the Apostle reasons, implies an offering. That offering, we have seen, was to be *himself*.—After the law and the prophets, as a kind of intermediate *nuncio* between Moses and Christ, came John the Baptist: and what is *his* testimony? "Looking upon Jesus as he walked,"—while his bodily eye was fixed, in reverential love, upon the antitype, the eye of his mind glanced back to the sacrificial type, and he proclaimed—"Behold the

* Dr. Pye Smith's Four Discourses, &c., p. 25.

Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" *—After his forerunner comes Jesus himself; and *he* says—"The Son of man is come, to give his life a ransom for many:"—"I lay down my life for the sheep:"—"This is my body, which is given for you. This is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you"—"which is shed for remission of sins unto many." †—Then follow the apostles, fully commissioned and fully enlightened, agreeably to their Master's assurance, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now: howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." ‡ And with this fulness of promised light, is there any change? No: only the clearer and more complete development of the same blessed truth. Hear *Peter*:—"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree:"—"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God:"—"Ye are redeemed, not with corruptible things, as silver and gold,—but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:"—Hear *John*:—"The blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanseth us from all sin:"—"And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world:"—"Herein is love, not

* John i. 29.
† Matt. xx. 28. John x. 15. Luke xxii. 19, 20. Matt. xxvi. 28.
‡ John xvi. 12, 13.

that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."—Hear *Paul*:—"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him:" —"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us:"—"Who gave himself for our sins:"—"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins:"—"Who gave himself a ransom for all:"— "He hath made him who knew no sin to be sin for us; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."* And I need not say how full of the doctrine of atonement is the epistle in which our text lies, of which the evidence is sufficiently satisfactory that Paul was the writer. Look at the text itself with its context:—"But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place,

* 1 Pet. ii. 24. iii. 18. i. 18, 19. 1 John i. 7. ii. 2. iv. 10. Rom. v. 6—9. Gal. iii. 13. Gal. i. 4. Eph. i. 7. 1 Tim. ii. 6. 2 Cor. v. 21.

having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God?"—"For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; (for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world:) but now once, in the end of the world, hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many: and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation." * I might go forward with a large portion of the following chapter.—And, according to the representations of scripture, the praises of heaven correspond with the faith of earth. The Lamb that was slain is the theme of its everlasting songs:—"Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood." †—Surely, with such testimonies before us, evincing

* Verses 11—14, and 24—28. † Rev. iv. and v.

such a harmony in the divine dispensations, and such a unity of principle and design between the earlier and the later portions of divine revelation,—it would be far more consistent to renounce the authority of the Bible at once, than to admit that authority, and deny that it teaches the doctrine of redemption by substitutionary sufferings or sacrificial atonement.

In such an atonement, let me now remark, there are obviously presupposed certain attributes of the divine character. These are, especially, RIGHTEOUSNESS and MERCY. — With regard to the former, it must to every mind be manifest, that righteousness is the very perfection in the nature of the supreme Ruler, and the very quality in his government, that renders atonement necessary; the clearing of righteousness from every unfavourable imputation, as if sin were winked at, or its criminal desert were under-rated, and allowed to pass without its punitive recompence, being the very purpose which atonement is designed to answer, in the pardon and acceptance of the guilty. —It is of first-rate consequence, however, to bear in mind, that in the idea of atonement mercy is as necessarily presupposed as righteousness. If righteousness was what rendered atonement necessary, mercy was necessary to an atonement being provided. The doctrine has, on this point, been most perversely and pertinaciously misrepresented; as if the idea of atonement implied the existence

of vindictiveness and implacability, — and as if no mercy could be exercised, till this vindictiveness had been appeased. Whereas, nothing can be clearer, than that, had there not been mercy previously in the character of the divine Ruler, the idea of atonement could never have suggested itself. It is the dictate of mercy. A vindictive being could never have thought of it; or, if the thought suggested itself, it could only have been to meet with instant and indignant repudiation. A vindictive being would have allowed stern justice to take its course, to the utmost limit of the exaction of merited suffering. Mercy, in the divine mind, pleads for the sinner. But such is the harmonious unity of the divine character,—the spirit of each of the attributes forming an element in all the rest,—the mercy being righteous mercy, and the righteousness being merciful righteousness, — that mercy itself can advance no plea but with the concurrence and to the honour of righteousness. Still, had not God "delighted in mercy," the thought of providing means for securing the honour of righteousness in order to its consistent exercise, could never have presented itself to his mind. Such a thought would have been the furthest possible from a spirit that had pleasure in vengeance. Be it remembered, then, that atonement produces no change in the divine character. The very idea is blasphemy. God is, in every respect, the same since the

atonement that he was before, and was the same before that he has been since. Mercy, infinite like all his other attributes, belonged to his nature from eternity. He does not delight in mercy because the atonement has been made; but the atonement has been made, because he delighted in mercy. The atonement is the manifestation of righteousness and mercy in union. It is the suggestion of love; the invention of wisdom; the vindication of justice; the way for the honourable exercise of pardoning grace. This is the invariable representation of the matter in the Bible. Nowhere is the divine Being represented there as loving men in consequence, or on account of, the atonement. Its language is—"God *so loved* the world, *that he gave* his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life:"—"God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us:"—"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Let all, then, beware of confounding between the practical exercise of mercy in the divine government, and the existence and operation of mercy in the divine character. To the former a provision is necessary for the honour of justice; but of the latter this very provision is the gracious dictate.

Atonement, then, is that in consideration of which sin is pardoned, and the sinner received

into favour and made the participant of blessing. It is not the pardon itself, nor the favour itself, nor the blessing itself; but that on account of which the pardon, the favour, and the blessing are conferred.—There is one light in which the effect of the atonement is prominently and delightfully represented, in explanation of which a few words are necessary, inasmuch as here too there are misapprehensions. It is—RECONCILIATION. The gospel is called—and there is not in the inspired volume a more interesting designation of it—"the word of reconciliation," and the gospel ministry "the ministry of reconciliation:"—and of God it is said, that He "was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."—In what sense is this to be understood?

Extremes meet. Socinians, by whom the doctrine of atonement is entirely denied, have, on this point, taken up the ground, that in the scriptures, God is no where represented as reconciled to man, but man as reconciled to God. For example, in the very passage, with its context, just referred to—2 Cor. v. 18—20; where we have the phraseology —"reconciled us to himself,"—"reconciling the world unto himself,"—"be ye reconciled to God:" —and in Rom. v. 10, "If, when we were *enemies*, we were *reconciled unto God* by the death of his Son." Without stopping to inquire, how far the views entertained by them of man's nature, when

they speak of it as a nature of which the sinfulness, to the degree in which it may exist, is the effect of ignorance alone, and to which God only requires to be presented in his true character in order to his becoming the object of love,—thus denying the description given of it as "enmity against God," a description which, if it means any thing evil at all, must mean enmity against that very character,—without stopping to inquire how far such lenient views of human corruption harmonize with the Bible view of even man's reconciliation to God,—we have been accustomed to meet the objection by observing the peculiar manner in which the verb to *reconcile*, and its corresponding noun *reconciliation* are, in this book, used: namely, when the person said to be reconciled is not the *offended* party, but the *offender*. Instances of this occur in 1 Sam. xxix. 4, "And the princes of the Philistines were wroth with him; and the princes of the Philistines said unto him, Make this fellow return, that he may go again to his place which thou hast appointed him, and let him not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he be an adversary to us; for wherewith should he reconcile himself unto his master? should it not be with the heads of these men?" And in Matt. v. 23, 24, "Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remember-berest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then

come and offer thy gift."—In the former instance, Saul, David's master, was the offended party,—reasonably or unreasonably, justly or unjustly, is not the present question:—yet David is not spoken of as reconciling his master to him, but as reconciling himself to his master. The obvious meaning, however, is, that by "the heads of these men," David would appease or propitiate his master, avert his displeasure, and conciliate his favour.—In the other instance, the same remark applies. The meaning of "be reconciled to thy brother," when the party addressed is the offender, and the brother the offended, evidently is—Make peace with thy brother: by all suitable means conciliate him, and remove out of the way the grudge, or obstacle to intercourse, of which thou hast been the cause.—On the same principle, then, when sinners are represented as *reconciled to God*, the expression should be understood as comprehending, not only the relinquishing of their enmity—their spirit of alienation and hostility—towards God, but also the turning away of God's displeasure against them; the bringing of the parties, in short, into a state of *mutual friendship*. And that this is really the meaning, appears from the terms of the very passage in which the phrase so repeatedly and pointedly occurs:—God's "reconciling the world unto himself" being there explained of his "not imputing their trespasses unto them:" that is, of his bringing them, by forgiveness into a state of

favour and acceptance with himself. And the same thing is equally manifest in the other quotation, Rom. v. 10, if it be only taken in connexion with the previous verse: "Much more, then, being now *justified by his blood*, we shall be saved from wrath through him:—for if, when we were enemies, we were *reconciled to God by the death of his Son*, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." If being "*reconciled to God by the death of his Son*" be not here *inclusive* at least of being "*justified by his blood*," it will not be easy to make out the validity of the apostle's reasoning. —With this we have been accustomed to connect another consideration, namely, that though the precise phrase of *God's being reconciled to man* may not be employed, there are, in his word, not a few expressions which are in effect equivalent to it; and if the sentiment is expressed, the mere mode of expressing it is of comparatively trivial moment. In the scriptures we find it affirmed, that "God is angry with the wicked every day;" that he "hateth all the workers of iniquity;" that "the Lord is jealous, and revengeth; that he revengeth and is furious; that he will take vengeance on his adversaries, and reserveth wrath for his enemies;" that he has "revealed from heaven his wrath against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men:" and the "children of disobedience" are denominated "children of wrath."—On the other hand, when God forgives iniquity, he is, in perfect

consistency with such expressions, represented as "turning from the fierceness of his anger, and taking away all his wrath;" as "not retaining his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy;" as "pacified towards the objects of his forgiveness, notwithstanding all that they have done:" and they who before were "children of wrath," are described as then saying, with holy and humble joy, "O Lord, I will praise thee; for though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away."*

Do not such representations, then, which abound in the scriptures, warrant us to say, that there is a sense in which God may with propriety be spoken of as *reconciled to sinners?*—But, as I have said, *extremes meet.* Some of those who advocate the universality of the atonement, and the consequent universality of the love manifested in it, have thought it necessary, in order to consistency with themselves, to take up the same ground with Unitarians as to the phraseology in question. The blessed God, they in substance allege, is not, and has never been, the enemy of man, but is, and has ever been, his friend; and therefore it cannot be right to speak of him as *reconciled:*—man is the enemy, man alone; and therefore the idea of reconciliation, and the terms expressing it, should be restricted to him.—But the whole embarrassment

* Discourses on the Socinian Controversy. Disc. vii. pp. 230, 231.

seems here to arise, I will not say from not adverting, but from not giving due consideration and weight, to the distinction between the Godhead *personally* and the Godhead *rectorally* considered,—or between Deity in his *character*, and Deity in his *government*. The distinction is one which everybody understands. The difference may often be very wide between the personal feelings of a human magistrate towards a criminal, and those with which he regards him, and is bound to regard him, officially. As the friend of the law, of the constitution, of the community, of social order, he may feel and manifest towards him all the severity of indignation, while there are struggling in his bosom feelings of personal interest, and pity, and affection, which it is his duty to coerce into abeyance.—To speak, indeed, of the *enmity* of God against the sinner, if such phraseology were by any employed, I should conceive to be very unwarrantable; because *enmity* is invariably used as a term of personal feeling. But where there is no personal enmity, there may be judicial displeasure. It is, on all hands, admitted, that atonement has reference to God, not personally considered, but rectorally. The terms which have been quoted from his own word, respecting his anger, wrath, fury, vengeance, hatred, have been designated by an excellent modern writer, though not on the same side of certain questions on our present

subject with myself, — "terms of government."* "It must be universally admitted," says another, "that the wrath, the vengeance, and even the fury, sometimes in Scripture ascribed to the great God, are but impressive figures, which denote, not the feeling of a person, but the attributes of offended law—the awards of public justice."†—"Every one must admit," says a third, "that this is the language of condescension to the weakness of human conceptions; and that it must be understood in a manner congruous with the perfection of the divine nature. No agitations, or emotions, no mutability of knowledge or will, can for a moment be admitted. A careful survey of the whole testimony of the Scriptures, in this view, will show us, that the design of these awfully sublime expressions is, to represent to us God's necessary and infinite abhorrence of moral evil, and his determination to give all suitable evidences or expressions of that abhorrence."‡—Every thing of the nature of personal vindictiveness ought to be carefully excluded from our conceptions of the divine Being, when he enacts, threatens, and executes the punishment of iniquity. Were there any thing of this kind, it has

* Rev. Dr. William Symington.

† The Christian Atonement: its basis, nature, and bearings; or the principle of substitution considered, as applied in the redemption of man. By the Rev. Joseph Gilbert, page 114.

‡ Dr. J. P. Smith's Four Discourses, &c., pp. 49, 50.

been most truly remarked that atonement could not pacify it; the sufferings of a substitute would "avail it nothing;" it could be satisfied by no vengeance but that which, in some way or other, fell on the offender's own head. — It must be obvious, therefore, that under whatever capacity Deity is regarded when he accepts an atonement, it is under the same capacity that he is spoken of as having "his anger turned away," and being "pacified." Under this capacity, then, why may not *reconciliation* be predicated of him; when the term is understood, not of the removal of a personal enmity which has no existence, but of a judicial and damnatory displeasure, which not only has existence, but is unutterably terrible?—In this way "the word of reconciliation," as a designation of the gospel, will have a comprehensiveness of import, of which otherwise it must be destitute; inasmuch as the reconciliation offered and effected by it will include both the parts, alike essential, of the sinner's salvation,—his deliverance from the judicial wrath of his offended Sovereign, and the reconciliation of his own alienated and rebellious heart to that Sovereign's character, government, and law.

At this point we must stop for the present.— In next discourse, we shall have occasion to consider the *proper value* of the Christian atonement, or the source whence its sufficiency arose:—the

question, in what sense, and under what aspect, *justice was satisfied* by it:—and we may enter on the further question, *on whose behalf the satisfaction was made*, or, *for whom Christ died;* that is, on the question of *universal or limited atonement*.

DISCOURSE II.

VALUE OF THE ATONEMENT—IMPORT OF SATISFACTION TO DIVINE JUSTICE.—EXTENT OF THE ATONEMENT.

HEB. IX. 26.—"BUT NOW ONCE, IN THE END OF THE WORLD, HATH HE APPEARED, TO PUT AWAY SIN BY THE SACRIFICE OF HIMSELF."

THE contents of our former discourse on this text, in which we considered the general nature of atonement, and the general character and design, as represented in Scripture, of the Christian atonement, your time will not allow me to recapitulate. I shall proceed at once to the important topics, which I stated at the conclusion of it should next engage our attention. These were—the *proper value* of the atonement, or the question *whence arose its sufficiency*:—the true sense in which *divine justice was satisfied* by it:—and the further inquiry—*in whose behalf* the satisfaction was made, or, *for whom Christ died*, which, in other words,

is the inquiry, whether the atonement was *limited* or *universal*.

I. The first of these inquiries, I need hardly say, is one that enters deeply into the very essence of our present discussion. Had the work of Christ been only the communication to men of the mind of God, it might have been of comparatively little moment who was the messenger, provided he presented unquestionable credentials of his divine commission. But at present I have no argument with those who regard Jesus as a mere "teacher sent from God." I assume, as having been proved from scripture in our former discourse, that one grand and primary end of his appearance in our world, was—TO MAKE ATONEMENT,— atonement BY SACRIFICE:—This is the doctrine of our text; and we formerly showed you, how the doctrine, with progressive clearness of discovery, from the hour of the first promise till the outpouring of the Spirit on pentecost and the full communication of his lessons, pervades the bible.

If it is asked, then, what constituted the *proper value* of his atonement?—whence arose its *sufficiency?*—I point instantly, for my answer, to one word in the text. It is the word "HIMSELF,"—"the sacrifice of HIMSELF." Strong emphasis is ever laid on this. He was not the priest only, but the victim. "He offered up HIMSELF." "He gave HIMSELF for us, an offering and a sacrifice unto God, for a sweet-smelling savour." Mark the

contrast, in this particular, between the priests under the law and the great "High priest of our profession." It is reiterated in various parts of this epistle. I keep to the chapter where our text lies. Verses 11–14—"But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God?" And verses 24–28—"For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; (for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world:) but now once, in the end of the world, hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many: and unto them that look for him

shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation."—To bring out fully and impressively the connexion of this with the value and sufficiency of the atonement, look to what the Apostle says in the beginning of the epistle—Chap. i. 3, "Who, being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."—Yes: here lies the "mystery of mysteries;" and here, at the same time, lies its explanation. The mystery of mysteries is that of "God manifested in the flesh:"— the explanation of the mystery—(not the rendering of it comprehensible by our minds, but the adequate reason of the wonderful fact)—is in the divinely benevolent purpose of his incarnation. And here too lies what stamps upon the atonement its true value, —a value which is, strictly and properly, *infinite*. The sacrifice was not merely of divine appointment, but itself divine. Translate the words as you will, they imply divinity; and in this they are in harmony with the entire tenor and numberless explicit testimonies of the word of God. It is true, that Deity could not suffer;—that in making the expiation, the suffering could be endured by the manhood alone. But the person whose manhood suffered was "Immanuel,"—was "God manifest in the flesh." It was He who is "the brightness of the divine glory,"—"the true and proper repre-

sentation of the infinite perfection of the Deity," in whom "this perfect glory, this total divine majesty, is really inherent, so that it shines forth from him, and he is the communicator of its knowledge and enjoyment to mankind,"—who is "the express image," or accurate impression, "of the divine subsistence, and who upholdeth all things by the word of his power,"—the sustainer of all creation, and the supreme disposer of all its events,—it was HE who "BY HIMSELF expiated our sins." *

The value, or sufficiency, of the propitiatory sacrifice, then, was not the result of *mere divine appointment*. The strong statement of the writer of this epistle, in the fourth verse of the following chapter,—"It was not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin,"—is evidently meant to express an impossibility *in the nature of the thing*. We stated, in last discourse, the design of the atonement,—as relating, not to the fact, great as it is, of man's salvation alone, but to the public vindication of the divine righteousness, the maintenance, in all their unsullied dignity, of the honours of the divine throne, in extending mercy to the guilty. Now, it is utterly impossible for our minds to imagine such a purpose effected by such means. We are unable to associate the two ideas together. We feel that it would be letting the divine government infinitely down, and ex-

* Dr. J. Pye Smith, Script. Test. Vol. ii. 676, 677.

posing it to the ridicule of the intelligent universe; —that the very supposition of such appointment is an insufferable insult to the wisdom and majesty of the Godhead;—that, in their own place, as simple prefigurations of the great atonement,—types of him who was to "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself,"—they were in beautiful consistency with the divine wisdom;—but that for the purpose itself to be effected by that atonement, they could not but be contemptibly worthless.—And the same principle that applies to the slaughtered victims of the ancient economy, may be fairly extended in its application to all the creatures of God. It was not possible, not only that "the blood of bulls and goats," but that the substitution of any one of these creatures, "could take away sin." Not only does every intelligent creature lie under its own obligations,—works of supererogation involving an infinite absurdity even in creation's highest departments;—but the purpose of atonement, already specified, is too lofty for the loftiest of created natures. No creature could ever be invested with such a trust. The finite could never give an adequate manifestation of the glory of the Infinite. To suppose the Infinite nominating one of his own dependent creatures to the task and to the honour of adequately compensating for the wrong done to his name and government by the rebellion of other creatures against his rightful supremacy, involves a contradiction from which our judgments indignantly

revolt. He who is to maintain effectually the glory of the divine character and throne, must himself be divine. He must be one who "thinks it no robbery to be equal with God," and who can thus offer himself to the enterprise without presumption. No other is competent. "The man Christ Jesus" is "the man who is Jehovah's fellow."

I formerly urged the propriety of our judging of what it was morally possible for God to do, not by abstract principles and reasonings of ours, but by an appeal to what he has actually done. On our present subject, we state the case thus.—The Mediator between God and men,—the atoning substitute of the guilty,—must either have been *created* or *divine*. There is no medium. Between Deity and the very highest of creatures, the distance and disparity are infinite. Now, the infinitely wise does nothing in vain; never employs great means for little ends. There is just proportion in all his works. If, then, for the existing exigency, a creature was sufficient, then a divine substitute was *infinitely more* than the case required; and if, on the other hand, a divine substitute was necessary, then a creature must have been *infinitely less* than the case required.—The fact, then, is before us. The Gospel reveals a divine mediator, a divine substitute,—a divine priest, a divine victim. Either such means were necessary for the end, or they were not:—if they were not,—then, for the reason already assigned, namely, the infinitude of his wisdom, God never

could have had recourse to them. And if they were, then all others whatsoever must have been, not merely inadequate, but inadequate by a strictly infinite deficiency.—The end to be effected, indeed, was twofold. It related to two parties;—to men, and to God. In harmony with this twofold end, —man's salvation and God's glory,—the mediator sustains the natures of both. He is man, that he may obey and suffer;—he is God, that his "obedience unto death" may have a sufficiency of atoning worth. The expiatory sufferings are endured in the nature that had sinned; while the association with the sinning nature of the nature sinned against—renders them worthy of the divine acceptance. They are human sufferings; but, through this association, their value is divine.

It is not, then, from the mere amount of suffering endured, that we conceive the true value of the atonement to have arisen:—it is from the dignity, the divine dignity, of the sufferer.—In this view of the case, it has, naturally enough, been asked, would not any amount of suffering, however small, have sufficed? There is only one answer which it is at all competent for us to return to such a question. We shall see by and by, that the atonement is not to be regarded as a mere mercantile transaction,— the payment of so much suffering for so much sin. Meanwhile, it is enough to remind you, how the idea of *manifestation* is associated with the atonement. There is not only a provision for the exer-

cise of the divine righteousness in man's salvation; but there is the *declaration* of that righteousness. Now, in order to this, there is required, not suffering merely, but the palpable and visible endurance of it. It would not otherwise have the necessary impression and effect. There is, therefore, external, or bodily suffering; and even that which is endured inwardly, (as, without question, the principal part of our Redeemer's agonies was) must have utterance given to it,—must discover itself by its outward symptoms. In a certain sense it is true, that, by the association of his divinity, every part of the Saviour's sufferings was impressed with infinite value; that every drop of his sacred blood had a worth in it untold; every pang that rent his heart, an amount of expiatory virtue for a sinning world.—But of the extent to which, for the purposes of manifestation and impression, the sufferings of the holy victim required to be apparent as well as real, you will at once perceive, *we* are not the judges. That was a point, which it pertained to Him alone to determine by whom the atonement was appointed, and to whom it was made.—We have before us, in the recorded facts, what by Him was deemed sufficient for every end in view. And, without vain and presumptuous speculation, we are, every one of us, sensible, that the spectacle of a Saviour *thus* dignified *thus* suffering, is enough for the purpose of salutary impression; impression, deep, solemn, awful, of the divine righteousness,—and impression,

amply and delightfully encouraging, of the divine mercy.

In describing the kind of sacrifice that was required, I have said nothing either of its *purity*, or of its *voluntariness* on the part of the offerer:—not from any light impression of the necessity of either of these attributes; but because I regard them both as included in the particular already illustrated,—its *divinity*.—In the first place, I conceive it to be a point which ought to be assumed without argument, that the humanity which, in the person of Immanuel, was associated with divinity, was *sinless* humanity. There is, to my mind, something unutterably revolting and self-contradictory in the idea of a fallen and sinful nature having been taken, in its sinfulness, into intimate personal union with the divine in all its untainted purity. The character of sinful human nature is summed up in the words—"The carnal mind is *enmity against God*." Look at the case, then. It is vain to modify it; for to modify, is to deny. And surely he must have a strangely constituted mind, who can, for one moment of serious reflection, entertain the thought, that in the one person of the Redeemer, Deity and humanity were at variance,—at moral variance,—the soul of the man in a state of enmity against the God,—the human will conflicting with the divine will,—the elements of corruption with those of eternal and spotless sanctity!—To say that Immanuel took into union

with the divine our sinful nature, but that by that union it was, from the first, preserved in freedom from sin, will be found, when analysed, to be a statement which explains itself away, and to amount to nothing less than that, after all, it was *not* in its sinfulness that our nature was assumed.—The perfect moral purity of the propitiatory sacrifice of the Mediator, was typified by the careful selection, so peremptorily enjoined, of unblemished victims, from the flock and the herd, for the altar of Jehovah. And indeed, it must to every mind be manifest, that a Mediator in whom there was any sin of his own, instead of being an available propitiation for others, must have needed a propitiation for himself. He who, according to our text, "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," was "the Lamb of God,"—the Lamb of Jehovah's own providing,—"a Lamb, without blemish and without spot."—And, as a priest, he was distinguished from all who had held the typical priesthood, by the very fact of his requiring no atonement for himself, as they had done:—Heb. vii. 26–28, "For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was

since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore."

With regard, in the second place, to the *voluntariness* of the sacrifice on the part of the offerer, it is, with no less obviousness, involved in his divinity. If Jesus Christ, previously to his assumption of the human nature, was truly God, it of necessity follows, that there was no superior by whose authority he could be laid under any obligation to act the part he did. His becoming man, and every thing whatever that was done and suffered by him in the nature he thus assumed, could be the result of nothing else than his own good pleasure. "Being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God,—yet he took upon him the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men." He voluntarily became the servant of the Godhead, for the gloriously benevolent ends of his incarnation; and then, when incarnate, he voluntarily "finished the work that was given him to do."

Into any further and more general discussion of the connexion between the divinity of Christ and his atonement, I must at present decline entering; first, because my views on that important point are already before the public,—and, secondly, because it would lead me too far and too long aside from my main object.—I proceed immediately, therefore, to the *second* of the inquiries announced for this discourse:—

II. That inquiry was—in what sense was the atonement *a* SATISFACTION *to divine Justice?*—What *do* we mean, or what *ought* we to mean, when we say that by Christ's propitiatory sacrifice the justice of God was SATISFIED?—The language, you are aware, is common with all who speak of the atonement: but it is to be feared that, in the minds of many by whom the language is used, the ideas attached to it are exceedingly undefined and vague,—and even, in some cases, not a little aside from scriptural correctness.

What is JUSTICE?—We formerly defined its province and its characteristic, to be that of *rendering to all their due:*—it follows, that according to the ground we assume on which to determine what is due, will our conceptions of the meaning of justice be the more strict or the more comprehensive.—By some it has been resolved into *benevolence;* being defined—"goodness directed by wisdom."* Now, it is true, that because of the injury which results from sin to the creatures of God, goodness, whose gratification is in the happiness of its objects, must necessarily stand opposed to it, and set itself against it. But then, that which does produce the injury to the rational creation, is not *sin* merely *on this account.* This would make *utility to the creature* the sole foundation of morality or virtue. But there are principles of immutable rectitude, of

* Stillingfleet.

which the origin is to be sought—it being impossible to trace them to a remoter—in the necessary nature of the eternal God. These principles are transferred from his nature to his law. Adherence to them is the creature's virtue, or moral excellence; and disconformity to them is his sinfulness. The former must ever operate beneficially, and the latter injuriously. The rectitude of the principles is the cause of their beneficial results; not the results the cause of their rectitude. In the results *goodness* does delight;—but it is rather with the eternal rectitude of the principles that *justice* has to do. The violation of the principles, as embodied in law, is the cause of guilt; and Justice, as the holy and jealous guardian of the principles, has bound itself, in the punitive sanction attached to law, to visit the guilt with due retribution.

But while by some justice has thus been resolved into benevolence, *benevolence* has by others been resolved into *justice*.—"Love is the fulfilling of the law." Love, therefore, according to this theory, is *due* to those towards whom its cultivation and exercise are commanded;—and wherever there is the idea of *dueness* (if I may coin a term) there is the idea of justice. Supreme love, is, in the strictest justice, due from the creature to God,—a love that includes, amongst its other elements, delight in his infinite and independant blessedness. And on the ground of the claims which mankind have on one another being reciprocal, the

command to "love our neighbour as ourselves," of which the practical counterpart is—"whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them," may also be resolved into justice ; the love, with its expressions, being mutually, and on the principles of rectitude, *due*, so that there is a violation of legal right when it is withheld.

It is obvious, that these apparently opposite theories have their respective foundations in the somewhat different senses attached by their advocates to the same terms,—their stricter and their more comprehensive acceptations, — and in the variety of ground on which the same thing may be considered as *due*. Each is specious ; and each, to a certain extent, true.—Yet after all, there remains in every man's mind a distinction between *benevolence* and *justice*. There is a *spontaneousness* in the exercise of the former,—a *going beyond* what the object of it has any *right to demand*,—which all understand and feel. The distinction pervades the word of God ; and is at times pointedly recognized and appealed to. Thus, when Paul says —Rom. v. 7. "For scarcely for a *righteous* man will one die : yet peradventure for a *good* man some would even dare to die ;" he assumes and argues upon it :—the "righteous man" evidently meaning the man of *strict practical justice*, and the "good man" the man of *benevolence*, who adds to mere justice the spontaneous and enlarged application of

"the law of kindness,"—laying himself out for the benefit of others.

With all humility, and on a principle by which God is honoured, it may, I think, with truth be affirmed, that, although no creature can ever lay his creator under obligation, or merit any thing at his hand,—yet, not on the ground of spontaneous engagement alone, but in the moral nature of things, there is something *due* from the Creator to the creature. It is the will of the former that gives existence to the latter. Now we cannot, without feeling that outrage is done to all our conceptions of rectitude, form the idea of a creature *brought into existence in misery*,—or, in other words, the idea of misery that is not, in some sense, *penal*. In this view, then, may we not, with propriety, consider freedom from misery as *due*, according to all the principles of rectitude, from the creator to his creature, considered simply as a creature, the involuntary product of his power?

But, waiving all further discussions of this abstract kind, and considering justice, according to the ordinary definition of it, as the attribute that *gives every one his due*, I have now to remark, that it has been divided into various kinds. They have been designated—*vindictive, commutative, distributive*, and *public*.

I set aside the first. It does not seem to me to merit the name of justice. There may, it is true, be righteousness in the suffering inflicted. It may

be deserved by the sufferer. But the epithet *vindictive* properly applies, not to the desert of the sufferer, or the righteousness of the infliction, but to the spirit and temper of the party by whom the punishment is awarded and executed. That spirit is *personal revenge*,—the spirit of gratification from the sufferings of one who is regarded simply as a personal enemy. In this view, I dislike the association of the epithet with the subject. The mean spirit of vindictiveness, and the lofty and dignified spirit of righteousness, have nothing in common. There is no principle of rectitude,—nothing that deserves the name of justice, in the infliction of suffering, and the consequent increase of misery, for no worthy end. To the spirit of vindictiveness it is no matter of concern, whether benefit arise from what it inflicts, either to the sufferer himself, or, through the exemplification of righteous retribution in his person, to others. It is the spirit of selfishness,—and of selfishness of the worst description,—of malignant selfishness. It cannot, at all events, have any place in the government of God:—and pity it is, that in any minds there should ever, from the mere want of reflection, be the most distant approximation to such an idea of justice, as subsisting in the character, and exercised in the administration, of the universal Ruler.

The three descriptions of justice which remain, are, the commutative, the distributive, and the

public.—The first—the *commutative*, is that which subsists between a creditor and a debtor, and has reference to pecuniary or commercial transactions. In such transactions,—if the debt be paid, no matter whether by the debtor himself or by a surety, the claim of justice is cancelled; the obligation is discharged; and no room is left for the exercise of any thing that bears the nature of grace or free favour. Nothing has been remitted; and there is nothing to remit. This description of justice has been by some called the *commercial*, and defined, as "that which gives an equivalent for value received."*

The second, the *distributive* "has regard not to pecuniary or commercial transactions, but to moral conduct and to the desert thence arising, either of reward or of punishment. According to it, the transgressor must receive, *in his own person*, the due recompence of his deeds."†—I have said, desert either of *reward* or of *punishment*. By some, in conformity with this distinction, this description of justice has been parted into two. Under the general appellation of *retributive*, they have classed *remunerative* and *punitive*.—*Remunerative* justice, in the terms of an eminent modern writer, "is the exercise of God's rectitude towards holy dispositions and actions, wherever existing, by all those manifestations and effects of his approbation, which may

* Dr. Jenkyns, p. 166. † Discourses on the Socinian Controversy.

seem fit to his infinite wisdom and benignity."*— *Punitive* justice is that which either, according to the original constitution of things, or laws of moral nature, attaches certain kinds and amounts of misery to sin, in its various degrees of enormity, as its natural concomitants and results, or visits it, according to its quantum of evil desert, with a corresponding proportion of directly inflicted suffering; the desert being ascertained by a competent judgment, and the suffering inflicted by a competent authority.

The *third*, or *public* justice, includes those great essential principles of equity, according to which, in indissoluble union with benevolence, the sovereign Ruler governs the intelligent universe:— those principles which bear relation to the great general end of all government,—the public good; and of which the firm and consistent maintenance, in their full measure of due recognition and respect, and in their full weight of authoritative influence, is indispensable to the well-being of every community.

The question is one of no trivial importance,— not one of mere abstract metaphysical speculation, but one that enters deeply into the principles of our present subject,—in which of these senses, or under which of these aspects, divine justice should be regarded, when we speak of it as having been

* Dr. J. P. Smith. Four Discourses, &c., p. 195.

satisfied, or of *satisfaction having been given to it*, by the atonement. In answering this question, I would say—not in the first,—not in the second,—but in the third.

Not in the first.—There is a great deal too much, it is to be feared, in the conceptions of many regarding the atonement, of the principles of commutative or commercial justice,—of the literal notion of debt and its payment. It is a grievous mistake. That sins are called debts, is true. But they are debts, rather in a figurative than in a literal and proper sense. We owe obedience to God; and all our failure to render that due obedience, may be regarded as an accumulation of unpaid debt. But it is debt of which, when once contracted, the payment is impossible. Even the sinless perfection of obedience for the future cannot cancel it; any more than a man can discharge the bond for his past debts by punctual payments in time to come. We can never pay up obedience which we have failed to render, as a debtor may pay up principal and interest of what he owes, and defy thereafter demand or prosecution.—And, as we owe obedience, we owe satisfaction for disobedience. That satisfaction we can never render. It can, in our case, consist in nothing else save the endurance of the punishment, which, in consequence of our failing in what was due from us to God, has become due from God to us. "The *wages* of sin"—that which we have earned,—that

which is, in justice, our due,—"is death."—Let it be remembered, that there is a material difference between the cancelling of a debt on payment of it by a surety, and the forgiveness of sin on account of a propitiation. The forgiveness of sin is simply the free remission of its punishment. The sinner who is pardoned, does not cease to be guilty, and to deserve the penalty. A debt of *property* may be paid by another; a debt of *obedience* never can. It is, in its very nature, intransferable. The sinner, in himself considered, can never cease to be guilty. A sinful creature may become a sinless creature. There may be an entire change in his nature. But a guilty creature can never become an innocent creature. That which has been done can never be undone; and that which has been deserved by the doing of it, can never cease to be deserved. No substitution, no atonement, can in this respect, alter the nature of things.—In these and other respects, the parallel between debtor, creditor, and surety in pecuniary transactions, and the sinner, the lawgiver, and the mediatorial substitute in the scheme of redemption, has by many been pressed too closely, to the injury of truth.—The atonement of Christ, then, we are satisfied, ought not to be considered as at all proceeding on the principles of commutative or commercial justice; inasmuch as the payment of debt, according to this description of justice, strictly and properly cancels claim, and leaves no room for the exercise of grace.

Neither does the idea of satisfaction by substitutionary atonement, bear application to Justice in the *second* acceptation of it. *Distributive*, or, as others designate it, *retributive* justice, according to its strict requirements, admits not of substitution. It issues a righteous law, with a righteous sanction. It passes its sentence of condemnation against the transgressor of that law. It makes no mention of any possible satisfaction but the punishment of the guilty themselves,—the endurance by them of the penal sanction in their own persons. It is only by the death of the sinner himself that the proper demand of the law can be fulfilled; that the principles of distributive justice can have their due application; and that, under this aspect of it, consequently, Justice can be satisfied. According to the requisition of justice, in its distributive sense, every man, personally, must have *his own due*. But in substitution it is otherwise. There is an inversion of the principles of strict retribution. Neither Christ nor the sinner has his own due. The guilty, who, according to these principles, should suffer, escapes; and the innocent, who should escape, suffers. In no strict and proper sense, then, can distributive justice be *satisfied* by substitution, when its demands, instead of being adhered to and fulfilled, are, for a special purpose, and by an act of divine sovereignty, suspended, superseded, overruled.—It is well to remark, however, that, in another sense, it *was* satisfied; all its

ends having been virtually, and to the full, effected by other means.

And this leads me to the true object of atonement. It is to *public justice*, as we have before defined it, that, in substitution and propitiation, the satisfaction is made. The grand design is, "to preserve unsullied the glory of the great principles of eternal rectitude; to show the impossibility of the demands of equity, founded in these principles and essential to the government of the universe, being dispensed with; to settle in the minds of God's intelligent creatures, as the subjects of his moral administration, the paramount obligation and immutable permanence of their claims; to give such a manifestation of the divine regard to these elements of his immaculate administration, as to preclude the possibility of any the remotest surmise that in the pardon of sin they have been at all overlooked or placed in abeyance; and thus to render it consistent with divine propriety, or, in other words, honourable to the whole character, as well as to the law and the government of Jehovah, to extend pardoning mercy to the guilty, and to reinstate them in his favour, according to the provisions of the gospel. It is thus that, in so pardoning, his regard to righteousness is as conspicuous as his delight in mercy; and, in the minds of the pardoned, the impression of the claims of the one as deep as that of their obligations to the other."—In this view of it, the scheme possesses a

divine grandeur. The glory of God, and the good of his universal empire—the two great ends of *public justice*—are with "all wisdom and prudence," admirably combined in it. It is as essential to the latter of these ends, as it is to the former —(they can never, indeed, be separated)—that the authority of the divine government be maintained in its awful and inviolable sacredness; that the demands of the law be upheld, without one jot or tittle of abatement; that no sin appear as venial; and that, if any sinner is pardoned, the mercy shown to the offender be shown in such a way,—on such a ground,—through such a medium,—as shall at once manifest the divine reprobation of his offences, and, at the same time, secure the restitution of the guilty perpetrator of them to the principles, affections, and practice of holy allegiance. —Such are the purposes, and such the effects, of the Christian atonement.

III. I proceed to our third inquiry—namely, *on whose behalf* the satisfaction to divine justice was made; in other words, *for whom Christ died*,—or, whether the atonement was *limited* or *universal*.

I am well aware of the variety of points that are, more or less closely, connected with this discussion, and involved in the conclusions to which we may come. These must, for the present, be put in abeyance; my object, in what remains of this discourse, being to bring before you, as briefly, clearly, and impartially as I can, the different theories which

have been held by theologians, with their respective classes of adherents, on the great question of the extent of the atonement.

These theories, or schemes, are three in number. The first is the theory of EXACT EQUIVALENT;—the second, the theory of INFINITE SUFFICIENCY, but DEFINITE INTENTION, or LIMITED DESTINATION;—and the third, that of INDEFINITE or UNIVERSAL atonement, with GRACIOUS SOVEREIGNTY IN ITS EFFECTUAL APPLICATION.—The last of the three is the one which I hold to be most in harmony with scriptural representations, and which, under this conviction, I mean to defend.

I. With regard to the *first* of these—the scheme of EXACT EQUIVALENT, I shall not spend much of your time in its refutation; there being very few, of any repute, by whom it is now held. It is the scheme, as the designation I have given of it must at once have shown you, according to which the expiatory sufferings of the Redeemer possessed just as much of atoning virtue, or substitutionary worth, as was an equivalent—neither less nor more—for the merited punishment of all who shall ultimately be saved by it;—whose precise proportion of deserved wrath he is conceived to have borne, measured out with minute exactness, even according to the guilt of every individual sin. This scheme, I have before said, and I repeat it, has ever appeared to me infinitely derogatory to the majesty of the Godhead, and to the divinity of the mediatorial substitute;

bringing down the transcendant magnificence of the plan of mercy to a matter of mercantile calculation, —of debtor and creditor account. It introduces the principles of *commutative* justice, where they have nothing to do; or it overstrains those of *retributive* justice in a case which is beyond their range, and, although throughout consistent with them, yet quite above their legitimate application.— I have elsewhere set forth the various grounds on which I regard it as inadmissible, and shall not, therefore, dwell upon them now:*—its inconsistency with the infinite worth of the Redeemer's sacrifice: —its rendering (according to the principle on which it avowedly rests, namely, the measuring of the value of the atonement by the mere amount of suffering endured) the perdition of all mankind a greater manifestation of the divine righteousness and hatred of sin, than the sufferings of the Son of God:—its making the salvation of any besides the elect a *natural impossibility*, so that, even were they willing to be saved, there is no salvation for them, unless a further atonement were made, and they are excluded from salvation, not, as we are accustomed to tell them, by their own perverseness alone, but by an inadequacy of means:— its placing beyond the possibility of satisfactory vindication the *sincerity* of those divine addresses, by which sinners universally are called upon to believe

* Essays on the assurance of faith, and universal pardon. Essay II.

and be saved:—its taking into account, in its estimate of the atonement, one only, and that the least, of the ends it was meant to answer, calculating the amount of the *sinner's desert*, but overlooking the higher design of securing and vindicating the *glory of God*, a design equally requiring to be effected, whether the number of sins to be expiated, and of sinners to be saved, be great or small:—and its excluding every thing of the nature of *grace* from every part of the process of the sinner's salvation, excepting the original appointment of the surety, whose payment, in each case, of the estimated debt, cancels the bond, and renders the liberation of the debtor, not gracious, but obligatory.

After all, although each of these reasons still appears to my judgment as retaining all its validity, yet the *first* of them might fairly be considered as superseding all the rest. On the ground of the infinite worth of the Redeemer's sacrifice, arising from the divinity of his person, limitation in sufficiency becomes, in the nature of things, *an impossibility*. If the atonement was in its nature divine, then was it in its nature unlimited; and they who adopt the theory of exact equivalent, must undertake the contradictory task of *limiting infinitude*.

I have said more than enough of this theory; more than it deserves. But I have been induced to do so, by the apprehension that, few as they

may be who can be said to hold it from examination and conviction, yet in the conceptions of many, as indicated by the terms in which they are wont to express themselves, there is latent a great deal more than enough of its pitiful pounds-shillings-and-pence principle.—The more respectable modern writers, who, on other grounds, hold the doctrine of a limited atonement, decidedly reject it as held on that of exact equivalent.—"The point in dispute," says one of them, "does not respect the *intrinsic worth* of Christ's death. This is admitted, on both hands, to be *infinite*. There is no room for controversy here. . . . . We shall yield to none in our estimate of the intrinsic worth of Christ's atonement. That worth we hold to be, in the strictest sense of the term, INFINITE,—ABSOLUTE, — ALL-SUFFICIENT."* — "Take this language literally," says another, after quoting passages of Scripture that speak of Christ as "buying," "purchasing," "redeeming," his people,—"and you are led to the idea of a commercial satisfaction, a *quid pro quo*, stripe being rendered for stripe, wound for wound, and the measure of suffering exactly corresponding to the measure of demerit. Such a view of the subject, however, is for many reasons quit untenable, and I am not aware that there is now any individual of any note by whom it is avowed. The objections to it, ad-

* Dr. Symington, p. 238.

vanced by Mr Fuller, Dr. Wardlaw, and others, may, with all safety, be pronounced unanswerable." *—Here, then, we are, happily one.

II. The second of the three schemes is that of INFINITE SUFFICIENCY, but DEFINITE INTENTION, or LIMITED DESTINATION.—According to this scheme, the *infinite worth* of the Mediator's sacrifice is, as we have seen, distinctly and strongly admitted:—but *limitation* is contended for, as lying in the divine *destination* of the atonement made by that sacrifice; that is, Christ was appointed, and voluntarily undertook, to stand in the room of a certain number, and for them, and for them alone, the propitiation by his death, though in itself of boundless value, was made.

It is my wish, for the sake of clearness and precision, as well as the avoidance of repetition, to take this and the third scheme of atonement under our review together; and therefore, I here state again the latter:—

III. The third scheme is that of INDEFINITE or UNIVERSAL atonement, with GRACIOUS SOVEREIGNTY IN ITS EFFECTUAL APPLICATION.—According to this scheme, the atonement was designed as a vindication, manifestation, or display of the righteousness of God, such as to render forgiveness and salvation consistent with the honour of that perfection of the divine character; leaving the

* Dr. Marshall, p. 72.

supreme Ruler and Judge, in the free and sovereign exercise of the mercy in which he delights, to dispense these blessings more or less extensively, "according to the good pleasure of his will."

To the statement of the difference between these two theories, given by an excellent and able writer already referred to, who maintains the former of the two, I have little or no objection to offer:—"On the extent of Christ's atonement, the two opinions that have long divided the Church are expressed by the terms *definite* and *indefinite*. The former means, that Christ died, satisfied divine justice, and made atonement, *only for such as are saved*. The latter means, that Christ died, satisfied divine justice, or made atonement, *for all mankind without exception*, as well those who are not saved as those who are. The one regards the death of Christ as a *legal satisfaction* to the law and justice of God, on behalf of elect sinners:—the other regards it as a *general moral vindication* of the divine government, without respect to those to whom it may be rendered effectual, and of course equally applicable to all."*—I shall not now trouble you with any exception to the *wording* of this statement. The extent of such exception may appear in the course of our discussion of the respective claims of the two schemes to our preference.

In entering on this discussion, it has occurred to

* Dr. Symington—page 237.

me, that my fairest plan will be to give, in brief extracts, from their respective works, the sentiments of two modern writers, each of them in deservedly high reputation, both as a minister, and as an author.

I beg your attention, then, to the following statement of the *second*, or *limited destination* scheme, by the respected author just cited. The design of the passage I am about to quote, is to show, that the limited destination scheme is *required by the rectitude of the divine character*:—"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? A God of truth, and without iniquity; just and right is He. Reason, conscience, revelation, providence, all concur in attesting the perfection of his nature. The Supreme Being gives to every one his due. This principle cannot be violated in a single instance. He cannot, according to this, either remit sin without satisfaction, or punish sin where satisfaction for it has been received. The one is as inconsistent with perfect equity as the other. If the punishment for sin has been borne, the remission of the offence follows of course. The principles of rectitude require this; nay, peremptorily demand it: justice could not be satisfied without it.—Agreeably to this reasoning it follows, that, the death of Christ being a legal satisfaction for sin, all for whom he died must enjoy the remission of their offences. It is as much at variance with strict justice or equity, that any for whom Christ has given satisfaction should continue under condemna-

tion, as that they should have been delivered from guilt without a satisfaction at all. But it is admitted that all are not delivered from the punishment of sin,—that there are many who perish in final condemnation. We are, therefore, compelled to infer, that for them no satisfaction has been given to the claims of divine justice,—no atonement has been made. If this is denied, the monstrous impossibility must be maintained, that the infallible Judge refuses to remit the punishment of some, for whose offences he has received a full compensation; that he finally condemns some, the price of whose deliverance has been paid to him; that with regard to the sins of some of mankind, he seeks satisfaction in their personal punishment, after having obtained satisfaction for them in the sufferings of Christ; that is to say, that an infinitely righteous God takes double payment for the same debt, double satisfaction for the same offence,—first from the surety, and then from those for whom the surety stood bound."*

To prevent undue repetition, (of which a little cannot well be avoided,) I waive for the present any remarks on the precise amount of difference between a divine purpose in the *destination* of the atonement, and a divine purpose in reference to its *application*. Of this by and by. And waiving, at the same time, the notice of any other and

* Dr. Symington, pp. 244, 245.

minor objections,—I would, with all deference, except against this statement mainly on the two following grounds.—1. In the principle of it, the scheme, as here expounded, coincides in one important respect, with the personal compensation, or exact equivalent scheme,—namely, in the exclusion of all *grace* from the bestowment of pardon and the other blessings of salvation on those who receive them, and confining such grace entirely to the *appointment of the atonement itself.* There was grace, on the part of God, in that appointment, when all were regarded as guilty, and deserving death :—but, the atonement having been made,—made, in limited destination, for a certain number only, and made in the way of proper "legal satisfaction" for the offences of that number,—*grace ceases :*—there is no grace in aught that follows the making of the atonement. The whole tenor of the passage, in the letter as well as the spirit of it, maintains this. It affirms that God is "bound in justice" to pardon those sinners, the price of whose deliverance has been paid to him ;—and it reprobates, as a monstrous impossibility, that the Just One should be guilty of the injustice of exacting twice the payment of the same debt, of inflicting twice the punishment of the same offences. It is surely, then, very clear, that there can be *no grace in bestowing* what it would be *an act of injustice to withhold.*—2. The vindicator of the scheme under notice admits, as

a valid ground of objection to the theory of *exact equivalent*, which theory he repudiates, — that it leaves no consistent ground for the universality of gospel invitations,—no ground on which they can honestly be addressed to mankind at large. Now, it does appear to me, that the *limited destination* view of the atonement, as above explained, is encumbered, and hardly to a less degree, with a similar difficulty. Observe how the case stands. According to the hypothesis, the divine Being, acting on the principles of *justice*, "cannot either remit sin without satisfaction, or punish sin where satisfaction for it has been received." On the ground of satisfaction having been received for the sins of the elect, the writer, as we have seen, concludes that it would be a violation of justice to punish them in their own persons. And from the fact that "all are not delivered from the punishment of sin, that there are many who perish in final condemnation," he infers, on the principle stated, and quite consistently, that "for such no satisfaction has been given to the claims of divine justice,—no atonement has been made."—But if so,—and if the Divine Being "cannot," consistently with his justice, "remit sin without a satisfaction;" then it follows, that the pardon and salvation of a single individual, beyond the number of the elect, was prevented, not merely by a sovereign limitation in the divine purpose, but by a barrier of quite a different kind,—that it is *ren-*

dered impossible by the principles and claims of justice. According to this hypothesis, God could not, even on account of the atonement made by the blood of his Son, save a single soul amongst those who shall actually perish, without an infraction of those principles and claims; no satisfaction having been given, no atonement having been made for them. But if so,—if the restriction of the atonement has been such (no matter under what aspect or designation) as to render the salvation of more than those for whom, in destination, it was made, *impossible in justice*,—as impossible, that is, as that the just One should act unrighteously;—do not we feel ourselves as completely fettered in making the universal offer of pardon to our fellow-sinners, as we did on the scheme of limited sufficiency, or exact equivalent? If the atonement made has not been made *for them*, is not the exclusion from the possibility of salvation as complete as on the supposition of an atonement of limited sufficiency? If in such a sense no atonement has been made for them, as that they could not be saved without a violation of justice, is not the natural impossibility as real and as great as on the principle of exact equivalent? And do we not, on the one hypothesis as much as on the other, invite them to what for them has no existence,—and tantalize them with the offer of what is not provided for them?

On such grounds, as well as on others that have

already been stated, or may be stated hereafter, I hold by the *third* of the schemes of atonement which have been mentioned. It still appears to me, as it has ever done, much more consistent and satisfactory, to regard it as a "great moral vindication" of the divine character, and especially of the divine righteousness; not binding God to pardon any, but rendering it honourable to his perfections and government, should he so will it, to pardon all; leaving no insuperable barrier in the way of the pardon of any, whether arising from limited sufficiency in the atonement itself, or from such restriction in its destination as leaves the claims of justice unsatisfied except within the limit of that destination;—both of which suppositions involve *natural impossibility*, from the existence of *no atonement* beyond a certain extent;—to regard it, in a word, as an all-sufficient general remedy, of which the effectual application remains in the hands of the divine sovereignty.

But what says the other of the two writers to whom I have just made reference, to this representation of the matter?—"Our friends, with whom I am holding the present discussion, are accustomed to say, that the atonement is a general remedy, but limited in its application. That is, if I understand them rightly, a universal atonement, coupled with a purpose to confer the benefit of that atonement, not on all, but on some. Now in this mode of speaking I cannot concur. Why not rather reverse the

statement?—Why not say, a purpose to save some, coupled with the providing of a *general* remedy, in order to carry that purpose into effect? I mean, why not conceive the great God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, first to have determined, in his eternal counsel, to save a portion of fallen men, and then, in fulfilment of that determination, the fruit of the good pleasure of his will, to have provided a common ransom, a universal atonement, if you choose to call it so,—an atonement which might be applicable to all, which might be sufficient for all, which, in one point of view, might be offered for all, and which, of course, might open to all the door of mercy,—laying a foundation, broad enough and sure enough, for urging and entreating all, in perfect sincerity, and in the bowels of mercies, to believe and be saved?—This appears to me fully as conceivable as the scheme of our brethren, fully as agreeable to any idea I can form of the divine counsels, and, what is of greater moment, fully better supported by the language of scripture." *

Of the "language of scripture" we shall take a review hereafter. And hereafter too we shall have occasion to notice more particularly the grounds on which this writer rests the universal invitations and unlimited offers of the gospel. I now advert only to his proposed *inversion* of our scheme of universality of atonement with a limited purpose of appli-

* Dr. Marshall, p.p. 68, 69.

cation.—And on this point, I must leave it very much to your own judgments to decide, which of the two is the more natural and reasonable;—a great general atonement, for great general ends in the government of God, and accompanied with a secret and sovereign purpose as to the extent of its ultimate efficiency in personal salvation,—or a primary purpose to save a limited number, and then a great, extensive, universal remedy, to carry that limited purpose into effect.—The God of wisdom, I must repeat, does nothing in vain. Why a universal remedy for a special purpose? —We can readily imagine to ourselves a benevolent physician, who has discovered a particular cure, of sovereign virtue, providing his medicine largely, widely advertising it, and urging it on general use, while, at the same time, on special grounds known and approved by himself, he employs peculiar persuasion, and even kind constraint with some, to have it successfully applied in their cases:—but if his primary and sole purpose was the cure of these individuals, and the medicine was invented, compounded, and destined for them alone, how can we consistently fancy him preparing it on a scale adequate to the wants of a national community? We might well, in such a case, apply the question, "To what purpose this waste?"

You will perceive that I *assume* the scriptural authority of the doctrine of personal and unconditional *election*. I am a decided believer in that

doctrine; and I proceed now on the assumption of it, because, in my present discussion, I have to do, not with those who deny, but with those who, equally with myself, admit it, as a settled article of Bible truth.—Now, the whole controversy between the advocates of a limited and the advocates of a universal atonement, has at times been summed up in the one question—*Whether, in the purpose of God, according to the order of nature, election precedes atonement, or atonement precedes election.*

That election stands first, has been argued on the plausible ground,—a ground which, I grant, very naturally suggests itself,—that the purpose of the *end* should reasonably be considered as preceding the purpose of the *means*. We first determine our object, it is alleged, and then set about devising the means of effecting it.—I might observe, in reply to this, that it assumes more than can be granted,—namely, that God's sole purpose in the provision of the atonement,—or in the stupendous plan of salvation,—was the recovery from sin and its penal consequences of the definite number of sinners of the human family comprised in "the election of grace." But without enlarging, as we might, in the illustration of this remark, I prefer taking other grounds.—The whole question appears to me to turn upon a distinction, which I conceive to be sufficiently simple, and which yet I have never seen introduced on the subject. It is the distinction between a *purpose* and a *desire*. You

will at once be sensible, that we may *desire* the attainment of an object, without *purposing* it. Let me suppose that between us and the attainment of the object there are certain obstacles,—obstacles of a moral character, without the removal of which it cannot be legitimately and honourably accomplished;—we may desire, and desire earnestly that accomplishment; but unless we can see a way by which these obstacles can be overcome, and the end can be attained consistently with correct principle and unimpaired credit to our entire character,—we can never *purpose* it. Thus there are cases, in which the discernment of the means, though it need not precede the desire, must precede the purpose.—I may illustrate this from an instance which has been happily introduced in elucidation of another part of this subject,—the case of king *Darius* and the prophet *Daniel*. When the king, too late, discovered the malignant artifice of his courtiers in their conspiracy against the life of his justly favourite minister, and his own weakness and folly in allowing himself, through the power of vain-glorious self-elation, to become their dupe,—his *desire* to deliver Daniel was intensely strong: so that it is said, "he laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him;"—that is, he set all his wits to work, to devise means by which his own foolish decree might be set aside, and his servant's deliverance effected consistently with the constitutional principle in the law of the realm, which declared

all enactments, duly ratified by the signature and seal of the king, irreversible.—The labour,—the mental plodding, of the king, was in vain. He could devise no expedient by which, on grounds consistent with the "laws of the Medes and Persians," the thing could be done. And therefore, though there was *desire*, there was *no purpose*.

Now, there is one point, in which all illustrative examples drawn from the affairs of men, necessarily fail. When we apply them to divine transactions, we must beware of imagining time consumed in meditative and inventive thought. With Deity, all is intuition. But still, if we guard against such conceptions, and bear in mind the strictly intuitive character of all the Infinite Mind's operations, and the true distinction between the order of nature and the order of time,—there is a *principle* in the example adduced that is manifestly applicable to divine purposes as well as human. We might conceive the *desire* of divine mercy as bent on saving sinners;—but in order to this desire becoming a *purpose* in the mind of the Godhead, there must of necessity be the discernment of a way in which the salvation may be effected in consistency with the full honour of every attribute of his character and every principle of his government. To suppose God to purpose salvation, and to ordain sinners to the possession of it, previously to such discernment and independently of it, (speaking, as we necessarily must, after the manner of men) is to suppose him

doing what it is morally impossible for him to do. —The language of Scripture, accordingly, is in beautiful harmony with the principle laid down, of the necessity of such discernment and determination of honourable means, in order to the formation of the purpose to save. The mediator, or atoning substitute, is not represented as chosen and appointed *for the elect*,—but the elect as chosen *in the Mediator*. Thus in Eph. i. 4—7.—"According as he hath *chosen us in him* before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved: in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." Here the choice, and the predestination to the adoption of children and its privileges, are *in Christ*, as well as the subsequent actual acceptance, redemption, and forgiveness.—Thus too in 2 Tim. i. 8. "Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was *given us in Christ Jesus*, before the world began:" —and in Eph. iii. 10, 11, "To the intent that now, unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God: according to the eternal pur-

pose, which he *purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" To such passages I may add those in which the names of God's chosen are represented as having been "written, from before the foundation of the world, in *the Lamb's Book of Life.*"*—Nay, more than one of the texts which are adduced on the other side of the question, I may fairly bring forward as satisfactory proofs on mine. For example:—the words of our Lord in John xvii. 6. "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me," have been cited as subversive of the doctrine of the atonement's having, in the purpose of God, preceded the election to salvation. That doctrine, it has been alleged, renders the words self-contradictory; because if Jesus, when his people were "given to him," was contemplated as having made the atonement, then, in virtue of the right of property in them which the atonement gave him, he would at once have said—"*mine* they were." Now this, I must confess, does appear to me very extraordinary. "Thou gavest them ME." Who speaks? The Son

* Rev. xxi. 27:—xvii. 8:—xiii. 8. The last of these passages is, in my apprehension, generally misunderstood; the words "from the foundation of the world" being connected with the slaying of the Lamb, and understood as meaning that the Lamb was slain, or, in other words, the atonement made, in the divine purpose, from everlasting. A comparison of the passage with the second of the three referred to, chap. xvii. 8, renders it at least more probable, that the words should be connected with the writing of the names, and the clause read—"whose names were not written, from the foundation of the world, in the Book of life of the slain Lamb."—In either view of the words, however, they equally suit my purpose.

of God. In what capacity? Beyond a doubt, in his capacity of *Mediator*. How, then, could they be given him in that capacity, unless he was first regarded in that capacity? He behoved to have been contemplated *as Mediator*,—that is, the plan of mediatorial substitution must have been before the eye of the Father, ere they could be given to him, as the stipulated reward of the work which, in the fulness of the time, he was to accomplish.

I would fain have gone a little further this evening, and have pointed out more fully the bearing of these two views of atonement, respectively, upon the mysterious but important subject of the *divine decrees*,—and the precise amount of the difference between them in reference to that point.—Time, however, imperatively interdicts the execution of the wish. I shall resume and finish the consideration of this topic, therefore, in our next discourse :—and we shall then be prepared for a more enlarged discussion of the universality of the invitations and offers of the gospel, and the ground of this universality as it appears in the scheme of definite and in that of indefinite atonement ;—of the obligation of sinners to comply with the invitations and accept the offers—or the all-absorbing question of the nature and extent of human ability and inability, and the scripture doctrine of divine influence in conversion. — These topics will be enough, and possibly more than enough, for our next discourse.

DISCOURSE III.

DIVINE RELATIONS. — CORRESPONDING DESIGNS OF THE ATONEMENT. — UNIVERSALITY OF THE CALLS AND OFFERS OF THE GOSPEL.

HEB. IX. 26.—"BUT NOW ONCE, IN THE END OF THE WORLD, HATH HE APPEARED, TO PUT AWAY SIN BY THE SACRIFICE OF HIMSELF."

TOWARDS the conclusion of last discourse, I mentioned, that the now prevailing controversy respecting the extent of the atonement has by some been represented as summed up in the question, whether, in the purpose of God, according to the order of nature, *election preceded atonement*, or *atonement preceded election;*—that in support of the former, the plausible ground had been taken, that the purpose of the *end* naturally and reasonably precedes the purpose of the *means:*—we first determine our object, and then set about devising plans for effecting it.—After simply noticing, that more is

here assumed than can be granted, namely, that God's sole or primary purpose, in the provision of the atonement,—or in the stupendous plan of salvation,—was the recovery of the definite number of sinners of the human family comprised in "the election of grace,"—I introduced what appears to me a fair and legitimate distinction, on which the question might be regarded as turning, namely—the distinction between a *purpose* and a *desire*. We may desire the attainment of an object, without *purposing* it. If there are obstacles, especially of a moral kind, in the way, our desire, how ardent soever, can never become a purpose, till we see some way in which these obstacles may be removed, and the end attained consistently with principle and honour. Thus, (in the case then introduced for illustration) king Darius *desired* most intensely the delivery of Daniel from the execution of his own foolish and wicked decree; but, unable to devise means by which this could be effected in consistency with the principles of the Medo-persian law, he could not get so far as to *purpose* it. On the same principle, speaking after the manner of men, and guarding in our minds against all conceptions of time consumed in meditative and inventive thought, (conceptions inconsistent with the strictly intuitive character of the divine counsels,)—we may suppose divine mercy *desiring* the salvation of sinners; while, in order to this desire becoming a purpose, there must of necessity be the discernment of a

way in which the salvation may be effected consistently with the untarnished honour of every attribute of the divine character, and every principle of the divine government. To suppose God to purpose salvation, and to ordain sinners to the possession of it, previously to, and independently of, such discernment, is to suppose him doing what it is morally impossible for him to do.—I just noticed, in what beautiful harmony the language of Scripture appeared to be with this arrangement;—the Mediator never being there represented as chosen and appointed *for the elect*, but the elect as chosen *in the Mediator*:—which appears evidently to involve the assumption of his pre-appointment, and of the means of their honourable deliverance having been, in the act of their election to it, present to the divine mind.

It was then my purpose, following out this line of argument, to have proceeded immediately (as at the time indeed I announced) to consider the bearing of the theories of the extent of atonement which we had been explaining on the mysterious subject of the *divine decrees*.—I have since changed my plan. I have ever deemed it our safest method of procedure, on all such subjects, to take into view, in the first instance, as far as possible, whatever can be discovered of *matters of fact;* inasmuch as, with our very limited faculties, we are much more likely to form a just judgment, when

we contemplate purposes in the light of facts, than when we take up facts in the light of purposes. In the present discourse, therefore, I shall insist principally on the fact, on both sides of the controversy admitted, of the universality of the invitations and offers of the gospel, and on the consistency or inconsistency with this admitted fact of the different theories relative to the extent of the atonement;—premising, at the same time, what in the very outset of our discussion will be apparent, that the two subjects are, at some points, so interwoven with each other, that to treat them with entire distinctiveness is impossible.

In reply, then, to the distinction made between a *desire* and a *purpose*, and to the alleged impossibility of the desire becoming a purpose till there is seen a way in which the end desired may be effected consistently with right principle,—it may naturally be argued, that the *desire itself may have a restricted extent*,—and that the plan for its consistent accomplishment may be devised, with a view to this *limited* desire becoming a purpose. Thus the desire, or good pleasure, of Jehovah, in giving indulgence to his delight in mercy, might be limited to a definite number; and the atonement might be devised, as the means by which this definite and restricted desire or good pleasure might be formed into a purpose, and that purpose carried into execution. And when election

is defined to be "nothing more than the love of the Father formed into a purpose,"* I am led to conceive that such is the view of those brethren who hold the precedence of election to atonement. For, although the "love" could not be "formed into a purpose," without the means being seen by which the purpose might be honourably effected; yet the love, and the means, and the purpose, might all be under the same limitation,—the love fixing itself on the elect, the means being devised for the elect, and the purpose, on the ground of these means, determining the salvation of the elect.

By this view of the case, then, I am naturally led to the consideration of the TWOFOLD DESIGN OF THE SCHEME OF ATONEMENT, corresponding to the TWOFOLD RELATION IN WHICH THE DIVINE BEING STANDS both TO OUR OWN RACE AND TO THE INTELLIGENT CREATION AT LARGE. —This twofold relation is,—that of MORAL GOVERNOR, and that of SOVEREIGN BENEFACTOR.

You will at once perceive, that, in the former of these relations, he had to do with the fallen race of mankind universally; while, in the latter, he had to do with the individual members of that race on whom it might please him to bestow peculiar favours; there being no principle, in my judgment, more axiomatically clear, than the one on which

* Rev. Dr. Marshall.

the whole doctrine of election is founded,—namely, that when all alike are guilty, the Supreme Ruler is at perfect liberty, by the inalienable rights of his supremacy, to dispense those favours as he will,—to "have mercy on whom he will have mercy."—To me, however, it does appear hardly less manifest, that the *rectoral* character of God stands *first in order*. He does not conform his moral administration to the purposes and plans of his sovereign beneficence; but all that he purposes and does as a sovereign Benefactor is purposed and done in accordance with the more comprehensive principles and objects of his moral administration. In all that he does, in every subordinate department of that administration, there is a constant and primary regard to the maintenance of the unimpeachable rectitude, the indisputable authority, and the untarnished glory, of the great principles of his government. In that government, he sustains an all-important relation to the rational universe, which embraces, as a province of his vast empire, our own world, our own race. To that world and to that race, as a whole, I cannot but think, the scheme of mediation ought to be considered as having its primary reference. It does not seem to me natural, that the particular should be considered as preceding the general, and the general as ordered in entire subserviency to the particular. I would speak with becoming deference on a subject which, like all that pertains to the vast adminis-

tration of the Infinite One, is so far beyond the grasp of our limited faculties ;—the terms used by Paul on another subject being, in all their emphasis, applicable to that administration, that "in breadth and length, and depth and height, it passeth knowledge :"—but it does appear to my mind to be laying too narrow and contracted a ground for the wonderful plans of God towards our world,—*to place election first ;* to make the purposed salvation of a definite number of the members of Adam's family the *punctum saliens,* the point of origination, of the whole counsels of God in the scheme of redemption,—in "the great mystery of godliness,—the manifestation of God in the flesh,"—and to regard the whole as framed and conducted in exclusive subserviency to this one end. I maintain, in common with my brethren who differ from me, the special secret purposes of electing grace. That there are such purposes, is to me a clear dictate of divine revelation. But to found all upon this ; to make this the basis of the entire superstructure, is another thing. It does seem to my mind (still speaking with diffidence and awe, "putting off my shoe from my foot, feeling that the place where I stand is holy ground") to stamp upon the whole, to the unnecessary offence of the enemies of the Cross of Christ, more than enough,—more, that is, than the word of God itself does,—of the aspect of exclusiveness.

To go still a step higher. I apprehend that, in contemplating divine transactions in regard to their final causes,—or the ends which they are designed to serve,—we are far too prone to look to these ends as they relate to *the creature*,—and to forget that there is an end which necessarily takes precedence of every thing of this kind:—I refer to *the manifestation of the glory of God*. This must ever stand first and supreme. The best way for any man to satisfy himself of this, is, just to consider—(and one moment's consideration will be enough)—whether there be any thing to which, as being of superior importance, the glory of God should yield the precedence. Even should he not be a man of piety, his reason will revolt from every such supposition.—It is, then, with regard to the plan of redemption in the moral world, as it is with the plan of creation in the natural world. From eternity, the infinite God had existed alone; and from eternity the purpose of framing a material universe had subsisted in his mind. But in the order of nature there was a purpose antecedent to it;—the purpose, namely, to "show forth his glory." He did not first purpose to create, and then purpose that the creation should be a manifestation of the glory of his perfections:—but he determined on the manifestation of his glory, and on creation for that end. Here was interminable vacancy,—pervaded only by the mysterious spirituality of his own essence. His infinite mind deter-

mined to fill it with his glory: that is, to make that infinite and essential glory which belonged to his nature visibly apparent. And such manifestation bears a necessary proportion to two things,—to the number of objects in which it is discernible, and the number of intelligent beings capable of discerning it. Both were therefore included in the plan of creation; and both were subservient to the great primary purpose.—On a similar principle, I imagine, we should regard the purposes and plans of God towards our fallen world. Here is a revolted province of his vast moral empire. He determines to make it the theatre for another manifestation of himself; to *fill it too with his glory*. The display is to be one of a new and different kind. It is to manifest the attributes of his character, as they form the principles and regulate the conduct of his moral government:—so that to those "Morning Stars" which had "sung together"—those "Sons of God" which had "shouted for joy," when the foundations of the earth were laid,—to those "principalities and powers in the heavenly places," there might be presented a view diverse from all that they had ever witnessed before, of "the manifold wisdom of God,"—of that wisdom under an aspect of it altogether new, working out new ends by new and appropriate means,—ends beyond example glorious and worthy of their divine proposer, and means possessing, in the moral world, as perfect and beautiful an adaptation to their object,

as any in the whole range of the physical universe to theirs. When their own rebellious compeers had been banished from the abodes of purity and bliss, and "cast down to hell,"—they had seen, with holy and submissive awe, the stern award of punitive justice,—and had witnessed Jehovah's love of righteousness in his vengeance on those who had cast off the yoke of allegiance to Himself and to its principles. Now, they were to witness a fresh display of the same righteousness,—but a display of a widely different kind; of righteousness, not alone, but in glorious combination with mercy,—of holiness and grace, — of light and love, — in a scheme, of which the unfolding and the consummation should give an expansion and elevation to their conceptions of Deity, enlarged and lofty as they had been before, transcending what they had ever experienced, and a corresponding intensity of devotion to their adoring homage, and strength to the bond of their loyal attachment. This was to be a new variety in Jehovah's moral administration; and a variety of the most interesting kind; pregnant with divine wonders; full of all the sublime and all the lovely, all the awful and all the gracious, of the divine character;—replete with glory to God, and with blessing to his self-ruined and miserable creatures.

It is obvious, that in this view of it, it must be regarded as a scheme of redemption *for the world, for the fallen race of mankind.* This is the first

light in which it naturally presents itself. There was, as we have hinted, another class of apostate creatures before men. What the reasons were why the blessed God did not make *their* fall the occasion for this manifestation of the glory of his character and of the principles of his government, it belongs not to us to say. He has not told us; and conjecture would be equally presumptuous and vain. It is enough for us to be assured that he did choose our world to be the theatre of his operations in the new character of THE GOD OF SALVATION. It is in this light, I repeat, that we regard the scheme first. It is a scheme for the world; not for fallen angels, but for fallen men.—And is not this, I would ask, in beautiful harmony with the representations given by Him who best knew the divine purpose in his own appointment and commission? What is the light in which *he* presents it to us,—and that at the very outset, I may say, of his ministry?—For an answer I refer you to the well-known and oft-repeated words of his interview with Nicodemus—John iii. 16, 17. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." Here we take our first stand. Of the comprehensive import of the word *world*, in this declaration, there cannot exist a doubt in any reasonable mind. The very

limitation in the close of the former of these verses clearly establishes the universality of the phraseology used in the beginning of it:—"God so loved *the world,* that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever"—(that is, whosoever *of the world,*—and what can this mean but *of mankind?*)—"that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."—It is to me truly surprising, that, with such words as these before them, from the very lips of "the faithful witness," any should venture to dispute the propriety of representing God as, in the commission and work of his Son, being actuated by love *to mankind.* The question of *special love to his people* will come hereafter before us. But in the meantime, God's love *to the world,*—to mankind,—to the race,—ought not to be questioned by any who believe that in these words Jesus Christ spoke truth. Say, if you will, that "the world" means simply Jews and Gentiles,—still, it is not any definite number of Jews and Gentiles,—it is Jews and Gentiles as together composing the world of mankind. Who, then, will deny that it was in love to the world, —in love to men, generically considered, that God gave his Son, when that Son himself so explicitly affirms it? With the Saviour's language before me, I know not what to make of such a statement as this:—"It is an error to say, that in its relation to those who are *not saved,* the atonement is a work of *love.* God loves none but his own. His

equity extends to all;—his love only to some?"* —He who so writes, surely had not the words of our Lord in his recollection at the time,—or must have understood "*the world*" in a sense which it never does bear, which it never can bear, and which, in this passage especially, would convert the Saviour's statement into a self-contradictory absurdity. For if "*the world*" here means "*God's own*," then the purpose of God's giving his Son comes to be, that whosoever *of his own* should believe in him might not perish; as if of his own there were some who did believe in him, and some who did not!

God, then, in giving his Son, "*loved the world.*" Make what you will of the *kind* of love; but do not contradict the Saviour himself by denying that he loved *the world.*—Then mark, I pray you, the *double form* in which the statement is made. There is a universal form used, with regard to the *principle* that influenced the divine mind in the mission of Christ; "God *so loved the world*, that he gave his only begotten Son:"—again; there is a universal form used, with regard to the *design* for which he was sent—"For God sent not his Son into the world, to condemn the world; but *that the world through him might be saved:*"—and then there is a *limiting statement* between these two, respecting the condition, or medium, of interest in the saving

* Secession Magazine for December 1842, p. 639. Note.

virtue of his mediation—"That *whosoever believeth on him* might not perish, but have everlasting life." This intervening restriction serves to show, as a kind of key of interpretation, the meaning we are to attach to the universal forms of statement. The words—"that *the world* through him *might be saved*," cannot mean that *all mankind* were actually, as the result of his mediation, to be saved: —the previous restrictive clause forbidding such an interpretation; it being only *such as believe in him* that are to obtain eternal life. The meaning evidently is, that *salvation is provided for the world*, so that *whosoever believeth may have it*:—that the water of life is so furnished, that "whosoever will" may "take it freely."—And this is only an instance, on a large scale, of a mode of speech which is quite in common use, and which, on different occasions, is employed by our Lord; in which things are spoken of, not according to their determinately purposed *result*, but according to their *designed tendency*. I may refer to an example or two. In John v. 34, Jesus says to the Jews—"These things I say, *that ye might be saved*." The meaning is, not that all who then heard him were, as the result of what he said to them, to be actually saved; but that the *designed tendency* of what he said was to their conviction and consequent salvation. On the same principle the remarkable words of our Lord in his intercessory prayer are to be explained—John xvii. 20, 21, "Neither pray I

for these alone, but for them also that shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us,—*that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.*" In the context, "*the world*" stands in repeated and marked distinction from *the elect*. This determines the sense in which it is used. It cannot, in these circumstances, mean the elect themselves. The only consistent meaning we can put upon the words, therefore, evidently is, that in the uniting influence of the truth, as apparent among its disciples, the world *might have evidence tending to their conviction* of the divine commission of Jesus.—Thus too in John i. 7, it is said of John the Baptist, that he "came for a witness, to bear witness of the light, *that all men through him might believe:*"—the *design* and *tendency* of John's testimony were, to produce in all a conviction of the divine claims of "Him who should come after him."—Such also is the principle of explanation for the Apostle's words, Rom. ii. 4, "The goodness of God *leadeth thee to repentance.*" This is its native and proper tendency; and this, on the part of God, is its rectoral design.—Such has been the fact, under every successive dispensation of religion, respecting every presentation of divine truth, and every department of its evidence. On the same great general principle, then, salvation is represented as having been wrought. It is for the world:—it is, "that the

world may be saved." The atonement wears what I may call an aspect of salvation towards the whole world. As the tendency of all evidence is to convince, and, in all cases in which evidence is presented, the design must correspond with the tendency;—so the tendency, or great general bearing, of the work of Christ is to the salvation of the world,—of men universally;—and the general design is in correspondence with the tendency.

Let us now, then, seriously and impartially consider how this representation accords with actual facts in the manner of the divine dealings with men in this important matter. Between the one and the other,—I mean between the end for which salvation has been wrought, and the manner of the divine dealing in presenting it to men, there cannot fail to be harmony:—and that there is, the following observations may show:—

1. There can be no question as to the *point of fact* respecting the *invitations and offers of the gospel,* that they are perfectly *free, unrestricted, universal.*—Even had there been no such thing as any sovereign purpose respecting individuals at all, they could not have been more so than they are. Specimens in proof of this might be multiplied. It is unnecessary. I mention only a few out of the many.—Isa. lv. 1, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price."—Isa.

xlv. 22, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else."—Isa. lv. 6–8, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord."—Matt. xi. 28, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."—Ezek. xxxiii. 11, "Say unto them, as I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"—Rev. xxii. 17, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."—Thus it was in the whole practice of the apostolic ministry. Whithersoever these commissioned ambassadors went, whether to Jews or to Gentiles,—it was invariably the same. They presented to all, without distinction or exception, the offer of free pardon and salvation, through the atoning blood of Jesus. They were under no restraint. Their language everywhere was—"Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins:"

Acts ii. 38.—"Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses:" Acts xiii. 38, 39.—Wherever they found a man, they found a sinner; and in every sinner, one to whom, without waiting a single moment to inquire into any particulars of his character or condition, —and far less bethinking themselves of any secret purposes of Heaven, or decrees of divine sovereignty regarding him,—they felt themselves warranted instantly to present the assurance, on his believing their testimony, of a free, full, and permanent remission of all his sins, through the blood of the Cross.—Such is the unquestionable *matter of fact;* that all are invited to pardon and life; nay, that all are commanded to believe the tidings of salvation as being *to them,* and for their acceptance and consequent benefit.—Then—

2. There must be *a ground* on which this can consistently be done; consistently, I mean, both with *existing means* or the *extent of provision made,* and with *divine sincerity.*—The consistency with the divine sincerity, will be more particularly noticed in next discourse, when we speak of the divine decrees and the grounds of human responsibility:—at present, we have more immediately to do with the *extent of provision made,* or of *existing means.*—Let us look, then, in this particular respect, at the three schemes of atonement, of

which the characteristic distinctions were laid before you in our last discourse.

First :—With regard to the EXACT EQUIVALENT scheme. After what was formerly said, any farther demonstration that no such ground can be found in that scheme would be a waste of words and time. The very statement of its nature, as limiting the atonement made to a certain regulated amount of suffering, corresponding to the precise amount of sin to be actually forgiven, is sufficient to settle the point. And those opponents of universal atonement, with whom I have the present friendly controversy, are, on this point, of one mind with myself :—"It leaves no room," says one of them, "for such an unlimited offer of Christ in the gospel, as to render those who reject him without excuse ; for, if the atonement of Christ bore an exact proportion in point of worth, to the sins of those who are actually saved by it, then the salvation of any others was a *natural impossibility*, and no blame could attach to such for neglecting to embrace the proffered boon ; indeed there would be no ground on which such an offer could be made."*

I pass from this scheme, then, to the *second*,—the scheme of infinite sufficiency, but LIMITED DESTINATION. Does *it* present a consistent ground for the universality of Gospel invitations and offers?

* Dr. William Symington—page 269.

And I am constrained to answer, that the very points in which it differs from the third scheme, (that of universal atonement limited in its sovereign application) and from which it derives its own distinctiveness, place it, in this respect, as nearly as possible, on the very same footing with the first, or exact equivalent scheme. In last discourse I briefly showed this. *Definite destination*, we then saw, means this: "That the Lord Jesus Christ made atonement to God, by his death, only for the sins of those to whom, in the sovereign good pleasure of the Almighty, the benefits of his death shall be finally applied. By this definition, the extent of Christ's atonement is limited to those who ultimately enjoy its fruits: it is restricted to the elect of God, for whom *alone* we conceive him to have laid down his life." *—By the respected writer who thus states the scheme, the atonement is further represented as being so exclusively for the elect, as that these two things follow;—first, that God is bound in justice to pardon each and all of those for whom it was made; and, secondly, that he cannot, consistently with justice, pardon any others, inasmuch as no atonement has been made for them, and justice does not admit of sin's being pardoned without it.—Now here there appears to me to be as perfect a *natural impossibility*, as on the former scheme.—On the scheme of exact equi-

* Dr. Symington, page 238.

valent, whence is it that the natural impossibility arises? Whence but from the circumstance, that, the value or sufficiency of the atonement having been limited by the deserts of a certain number, *there was no atonement for the rest?* It is from this,—from there being no atonement for the rest, that the rest cannot consistently be invited to pardon and to the other blessings of salvation. Now, the very same is the case with the definite destination scheme. There is *no atonement for the rest.* It makes not the slightest difference whence this arises; whether from limited sufficiency, or from limited destination. If there be *no atonement* for any beyond the number of the elect, there is the same natural impossibility in the one case as in the other. The advocates of the second scheme rest the propriety and consistency of the unlimited and untrammelled offers of the gospel (for which they contend as decidedly as we do) on the basis of the infinite sufficiency of the atonement in point of intrinsic worth. But by adopting the principle of limited destination, they seem to me to sweep this very basis away. Let the amount of value in the atonement itself be ever so great,—let it be "infinite, absolute, all-sufficient;" still, if in the divine destination it be *so for the elect* as that there is no atonement for others, but that before the sins of any beyond the elect could, in consistency with the demands of justice, be pardoned, another atonement would require to be made for them; then surely, as

much as on the principle of limited amount, you invite sinners in general to what has *no existence*. There *is* atonement, indeed,—atonement infinite in value; but the case is by this rendered only the more tantalizing:—it is *not for them;* nor are there for them any blessings on account of it, to which they can, with any semblance of consistency, be invited. I delight in the sentiment of the writer whose views I have been quoting, when he says—"In the fullest sense of the terms, we regard the atonement of Christ as SUFFICIENT FOR ALL. This all-sufficiency is what lays foundation for the unrestricted universality of the gospel call. And from every such view of the atonement as would imply that it was not sufficient for all, or that there was not an ample warrant in the invitations of the gospel for all to look to it for salvation, we utterly dissent." * My wonder is,—and with sincere respect and deference, I confess it is not small,—that the inconsistency should not at once be apparent, between the declaration of "an ample warrant in the invitations of the gospel *for all to look to it for salvation,*" and the affirmation, with regard to a vast proportion of these "*all,*" that there is *no atonement for them*. For if there be no *atonement* for them, there can be no *salvation* for them;—and surely the invitations of the gospel can never consistently go beyond the extent of the

* Dr. William Symington—page 239.

provision made. Where there is no provision, there can be no invitation.

I feel myself thus shut up to the *third* of the three schemes—the scheme of UNIVERSAL ATONEMENT—universal both in *sufficiency* and in *destination*,—but of which the *application* is in the hands of a *benevolent sovereignty*.—That in some points of the great subject under discussion there are difficulties,—and difficulties such as our limited faculties may never, in the present world at least, be competent fully to solve, I desire to be more and more deeply and humbly conscious. But there is a wide difference between giving our assent to statements of divine revelation, without our being able clearly to discern the principle of their harmony,—and assenting to such human interpretations of these statements as we *see to be irreconcilable*. That sinners are to be universally and freely invited to the acceptance of an offered pardon, whilst yet for a large proportion of those so invited there is no pardon possible, in consequence of there being no atonement,—are evidently, to my mind, statements of the latter description. They are incapable of reconciliation. With the fullest admission and impression of the humility which, on such subjects, becomes us, on account of the incompetency of our powers to fathom the depths of God, we yet are not sensible, in the present instance, of any presumption in saying that we *see them to be thus irreconcilable*. The

difficulties on the subject of *sovereign election*, I make no pretensions to being able fully to remove. But I trust, when we come to that part of our subject, it may at least be shown, that they are of a different kind;—wrapt, it may be, as to some of their bearings, in unrevealed mystery,—"hid in God,"—but still involving no palpable contradiction.

On the point now before us, of the free and universal offer of pardon to sinners of mankind without exception,—the *third* scheme of atonement is unembarrassed with any difficulty. We state the case thus.—According to the admitted constitution of the gospel, in conformity with the revealed principles of God's moral government, *sin cannot be pardoned except as atoned for*. In other words, atonement is necessary to pardon. I cannot see, then, on what other ground we can consistently offer pardon to all, and invite all to the acceptance of it, than the ground of *the atonement made having included all, and the sins of all*. According to every other system, there is an immense amount of sin that is unatoned for; and if what has had no atonement made for it cannot be remitted, with what consistency can we, in the name of God, offer the remission of it? There is a vast multitude of sinners for whom and for whose sins no propitiation has been made:—and if "without shedding of blood there is no remission," and no blood has been shed *for them*,—with what consistency can we invite and urge them to accept the blessing? But

on the principle of an *indefinite atonement*,—an atonement "for the sins of the whole world," the ground of invitation is clear and consistent. On this ground, we can, at once and freely, without the slightest feeling of hesitation or embarrassment, say to all whom we can ever be called to address—*There is pardon for you:*—but we could not say so, unless we were able also to say, *There is atonement for you.*—The two declarations must be co-extensive; the one evidently resting upon the other, and deriving from it its truth. We can tell them, that there is nothing either of limited sufficiency or of limited destination in the atonement, such as to constitute the slightest hindrance to their forgiveness; that hindrance there is none, *save in themselves*,—in their indifference, or their aversion,—their "evil heart of unbelief."

The terms of our text I cannot but consider as harmonizing with these views, and affording them support.—How does Paul here express the end or design for which Christ died,—for which he offered up the "sacrifice of himself?" It is in the words —"TO PUT AWAY SIN." The expression is significantly general. And for my own part, I am unable to discover any valid objection to our stating the design of the atonement in this form:—that it was an atonement FOR SIN, an atonement, whose value was so unlimited, so strictly and properly infinite,—that, on the ground of its merits, had God so willed it, fallen angels might have been saved as

well as fallen men; nay, had there been a thousand rebel worlds, the inhabitants of them all. But we are not called to regard it as extending beyond our own world.—It was an atonement *for sin*, with a special purpose of salvation by means of it, to the human race alone. Thus far we admit the idea of *limited destination*. But, with this obvious restriction, let us look at it as an atonement *for sin*. It is true, that sin is not properly an abstraction; that all sin supposes a sinner,—and that an atonement for sin must, in some sense, be an atonement for sinners. But this depends greatly on the idea we attach to atonement, or satisfaction. According to the principles of *commutative* justice, satisfaction is a proper payment of debt; by which he to whom the payment is made is laid under an obligation of justice not to require it at the hands of the debtor. In this view satisfaction *for sin* would manifestly be an absurdity. It must be for sinners, and for sinners according to the precise amount of their debts. But if, according to what I conceive the accurate language of Dr. Payne—"to make satisfaction for sin, is to do that which shall preserve to the moral government of God, that powerful control over its subjects, which the entrance of sin endangered, and which its unconditional forgiveness would have entirely destroyed,"—then is this end effectually answered by an atonement, which, in itself considered, is altogether independent of the numbers to be actually benefitted by it. It is the necessary

preparation, or clearing of the way, for the exercise of forgiveness at all on the part of the righteous Lawgiver, Governor, and Judge,—whether that forgiveness shall be extended to one individual only, or to "a multitude which no man can number." "He that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much." In either case, principle is violated; and with God, this of course is as impossible in the least as in the greatest. It is as impossible for God to pardon one on terms inconsistent with the principles of his government, as it is for him to pardon millions. The atonement is made, "that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus:"—not that he might be just in justifying a certain number, but that he might be just in justifying any,—in justifying whom he will. On this principle it is clear,—and indeed it is generally admitted, that the same atonement was necessary for the honourable forgiveness of one sinner, as for the honourable forgiveness of a world of sinners:—and that the atonement which was sufficient for the one was sufficient for the world. That atonement having been made, Jehovah, having provided in it for the honour of his righteousness, is left to the free exercise of his sovereignty,—or of his grace as a sovereign benefactor; and *from this source alone arises the limitation of its results.*

These observations,—which are in harmony, and in spirit and substance identical, with all that was formerly stated respecting the relation of the atone-

ment to the principles of *public* rather than to those of *commutative* or *distributive* justice,—are sufficient to meet and set aside the objection so generally urged to the representation we have given of the universality of the atonement;—namely, that a universal atonement must be followed by a *universal salvation;*—that if all sin has been atoned for, *all sin must be pardoned.* The answer is,—that either on the principles of the exact equivalent or of the definite destination scheme, the objection would be irresistible:—that is, all sin must be pardoned for which, and all sinners must be saved for whom, an atonement has been made of such a nature as these schemes, respectively, imply. But when atonement is viewed as having reference to the principles of *public* justice,—that is, as being intended to vindicate from all possible reflection, in the extension of pardoning mercy to the guilty, those great, eternal, immutable principles of equity, of which the maintenance in their unsullied glory is essential to the rectitude of the divine government, and to the respect for its authority in the intelligent universe,—it must be obvious, that the objection ceases to have either force or relevancy. The atonement, in this view of it, does not bind the divine Being to the pardon of any, but secures an honourable ground, should his sovereign pleasure so will it, for the pardon of all.

On this view of the subject, I had elsewhere used the expression, that the atonement "*left the divine*

Being at liberty to pardon whom he would." The author of "The death of Christ the redemption of his people," with a jealousy for the reverence due to the blessed God, which is always commendable, but which in this instance, I cannot but think, is misplaced, exclaims, on quoting it, "Away with the expression 'left at liberty!' I do not like such an expression in connection with the name of the Divine Being. To me it savours somewhat of the presumptuous."*—The expression was used, however, in any thing but the spirit of presumptuous irreverence. It means no more than that God is necessarily "righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works." It means no more, than that the atonement is not to be regarded as involving such a "legal satisfaction" as to lay the supreme Ruler under an *obligation of justice* to pardon and save all for whom it was made;—that it was of such a nature as to *leave him free* from any such obligation; free, in the exercise of his sovereign grace, to "have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and compassion on whom he will have compassion." God, assuredly, would not have been thus free, had the atonement proceeded on the principles of either *exact equivalent* or *definite destination*:—he could not, in consistency with the principles of his moral nature, have been at liberty to withhold pardon where justice required its bestowment.—The ex-

* Dr. Marshall, page 31.

pression objected to conveys much the same sentiment with that of Mr Fuller, when he says "he doubts whether the moral Governor of the world" should be considered as by the atonement "laid under any such kind of obligation to show mercy to sinners, as a creditor is under to discharge a debtor, on having received full satisfaction at the hands of a Surety."

In a very important sense, then, the atonement may, with the strictest and most reverential propriety, be said to have been FOR GOD. It was for the glory of God. This is the primary aspect, indeed, under which we ought to regard it. It was, in the terms of one of the writers on whose sentiments I have been commenting,—"not to secure a mere commutative satisfaction to the justice of God, but to glorify all the divine perfections, and to make an illustrious manifestation of the principles of his government before the whole universe of moral creatures."*—His rectoral glory having thus, by the atonement, been provided for,—his glory, that is, in the administration of his government as the great moral Ruler of the universe,—he issues, on the ground of the atonement, to this our apostate world, the proclamation of mercy, and holds out to all who will accept it on the provided ground, the free offer of a full and permanent pardon. This is what he does in the first instance. He

* Dr. W. Symington.

does it to the fallen race. To the whole he does it in righteousness; and to the whole he does it in love. Yes—*in love;*—in love to the world,—in love to mankind,—independently of all secret purposes of special grace. Was it not a boon to the world?—and was it not a boon, worthy of divine, that is of infinite, benevolence?—Yes; as we may see more fully in our next discourse,—even if not one sinner on earth had ever become an actual partaker of the blessings offered,—the offer of them was itself a manifestation, and a manifestation transcendently great, of "the love of God our Saviour towards man"—of "the *philanthropy*" (for such is the word in the original language) "of God our Saviour,"—and especially the offer of them on a ground, or through a medium, surpassing, in its character of benevolence, the blessings themselves even in all their "unsearchable riches." Suppose there had been no such thing as an "election of grace;"—suppose the atonement made, and, on the ground of that atonement, the blessings freely offered to men for their acceptance; and suppose them universally refused,—the whole of the race to whom the presentation of them was made rejecting the offer:—would that have been any proof that in the provision and in the offer there was no benevolence, no love?—Make the supposition, that, in these circumstances, the whole, so far as actual salvation was concerned, had proved a failure;—with whom

would the blame have lain?—with God, or with men?—When the king, in the parable, "prepared his dinner, killed his oxen and his fatlings, and had all things ready,"—was his benevolent and princely bounty the less generous, that the guests, when invited and re-invited to partake of it, would not come?—If a number of the subjects of an earthly monarch were to rebel, and, without the remotest semblance of aught to justify them, were to take arms against their sovereign; and that sovereign were to devise a plan by which, in consistency with the honour and security of his government, he could offer them a conditional pardon, characterized in the terms of it by equal clemency and equity;—were they, in the proud spirit of resolute insubordination, to treat the offer, one and all of them, with scornful rejection; would the mercy of the monarch, on that account, be either justly questioned, or less highly thought of?—And ought we, then, to think the less of the benevolence of God, in so wonderfully providing, and so freely offering, the blessings of pardon, reconciliation, and life, —because the blessings, when thus provided and thus offered, are refused? Would not the blameworthiness of the universal rejection have lain with those to whom the offer was made, not with Him who made it? They who, in this matter, confine the love of God to the number of the elect, or of the actually saved, must needs estimate the divine benevolence, not by the extent of the pro-

vision and the offer, but by the actual amount of good which, in his gracious sovereignty, he is pleased to bring out of it. But no estimate can be more unfair and fallacious. Suppose we set aside his gracious sovereignty altogether;—what he does to the world,—to mankind,—in his rectoral capacity,—in the provision made, and the invitation and offer founded upon it,—is done in love to the world, in love to mankind,—although not one of the entire race were to be saved; the unreasonable, obstinate, and unprincipled standing-out of the rebels forming no just depreciation of the clemency of their sovereign.—There is, I apprehend, with some, a great deal more than enough of a disposition thus to estimate the love of God by the actual amount of ultimate salvation, rather than by the extent of the provision and the offer of it. "This rectoral love," it has been said, "saves no man; this rectoral love delivers no man from sin, and brings no man to glory; this rectoral love is utterly powerless, utterly inefficacious, and leaves its objects exactly where it finds them. Millions upon millions of wretched men, upon whom this love has exhausted all its resources, have from age to age been 'lying in wickedness,' and through endless ages shall lie in misery."*—Awfully, lamentably true! But was the love of God to blame for this? Can there be no love,

* Dr. Marshall, p. 153.

unless there be actual salvation? Can there be no love in providing and offering deliverance, unless that deliverance be accepted? Was there no love in Jehovah's pleadings by his prophets, because these pleadings proved, in many instances, so unsuccessful? Was there no love in the compassionate Redeemer's tears and expostulations, because the city over which he wept was razed to the ground, and the unbelieving race with whom he expostulated, instead of turning from their evil ways, persisted in them, and brought "the wrath upon themselves to the uttermost?"—I am not forgetting the special love of God,—his sovereign distinguishing grace. Its nature, and the relation which it bears to the atonement, and which the atonement bears to it, will come before us hereafter. But, with the words of the Saviour, formerly quoted, in my ears, I dare not forget the extensive primary aspect of the divine benevolence in his own commission and work. When I find him declaring that very love, of which the transcendent magnitude could be no otherwise expressed than by the statement of what it had done for its objects,—to have been love to "*the world*,"—and to have shown itself in the grand general provision of salvation for the world, by the mission and death of his Son—"God so loved THE WORLD, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life; for God sent not his Son into the world to

condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved:"*—when, I say, I find my Master himself so representing the divine love to men,—I dare not either contradict or qualify his language.—And how is the plenitude of the divine benevolence held forth to our grateful admiration by the prophets?—"And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees; of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined."† If "thousands make a wretched choice, and rather starve than come,"—still "the love that spread the feast" and made all welcome to the table, is not the less to be admired and adored. It seems to me, I repeat, unscriptural, to make so light of this rectoral love, when in the word of God it is spoken of in terms so full of loftiness and energy.—If indeed there were not love in the provision and the offer, it might admit of question whether there would be sin in the refusal:—at all events, there would not be the sin (which yet is the greatest of all) of resisting and rejecting the love.

But even where the love of God is estimated by the extent of its electing grace, and by the amount of its finally saving effects,—and where the atonement is limited in its destination accordingly,—we find the writers who so express themselves, happily,

* John iii. 16, 17. † Isaiah xxv. 6.

though not, as it appears to me, very consistently, contending with uncompromising earnestness for the unqualified universality of gospel invitations. We have had one example of this. I quote another. A still more recent author, although denying explicitly that there is atonement for all, and affirming that all for whom there is atonement must necessarily obtain the fruits of it in pardon and life, while others, for whom there is none, must perish,—yet, whenever he comes upon the calls and offers of the gospel, is—"like a good minister of Jesus Christ"—warmly jealous of his freedom. His mind expands and his heart glows upon the theme:—and I could not, for my own part, wish my sentiments on that subject expressed in clearer or more appropriate language. I cite a passage or two,—for two reasons;—the first, to show that the opponents of universal atonement cannot help expressing themselves in terms such as harmonize with no other view than that of its universality; and the second, that the sentiment thus expressed will be of future service in estimating the amount of real difference between the contending parties.—"In speaking of the Saviour dying for men, or dying for sinners," says this writer, "I have used the expressions in what I conceive to be their strict and proper meaning, namely, as signifying his dying *with an intention* to save them. This, however, I am well aware, is not the only meaning the expressions will bear; nor is it the meaning in which they must be

taken, when, instead of 'men,' or 'sinners,' we say 'all men,' or 'sinners in general.' For all men, for sinners in general, the Saviour died, but not with the intention that they all should be saved. He died in their *nature;* he died in their stead; he died, doing honour to the law which they had violated, making reparation to the justice which they had provoked, bearing the curse to which they were subjected, suffering the death to which they were doomed."—This does seem rather singular language from one who holds that to all *for whom* Christ died,—*in whose stead* he gave himself, there is the certainty of pardon and salvation. Of the secretly accompanying "*intention to save,*" as extending to some only and not to the rest, we shall have occasion to speak in our next discourse. Meantime, I, for my part, am perfectly satisfied with the explanation immediately subjoined of the sense in which the atonement was *universal,* or the death of Christ *for all:*—"In other words, he died, removing every legal obstruction that lay in the way of their obtaining life, rendering it consistent with the holiness and justice of the Most High, with the security of his government, with the claims of his law, to justify and save them, provided they should believe. What is more, he died with a purpose to bring near his salvation to all, to publish the tidings of great joy to kindreds and nations, and peoples, and tongues, praying them, in the bowels of

mercies, to be reconciled to God, setting before them life and death, the blessing and the curse, although not determining to vouchsafe them the grace, as he was not bound to vouchsafe it, which might induce them to choose life rather than death. In this way, I conceive, the blessed Jesus died for all."*—Again :—"The Saviour, although in his death, he had not the same love to all, nor the same purpose to save all, may yet be affirmed with truth to have made the same satisfaction for all. It was public justice only that demanded his death; and what satisfied public justice in one case, necessarily satisfied it in every case. If satisfied for one, it must have been satisfied for all; if not satisfied for all, it could not be properly satisfied for any. It is satisfied, however, and amply satisfied, as the Scriptures everywhere declare; and so far as this goes,—so far as the vindication of the divine character and of the divine government in showing mercy are concerned, there are no limits to mercy, no limits to salvation, except those which the Holy One has prescribed to himself in his eternal counsels."†

The same sentiments are repeated, in equally decided terms, many times :—and as a specimen of the "godly jealousy" with which he regards his liberty to preach the gracious tidings and offers of the gospel indiscriminately to sinners of every description,—I

* Dr. Marshall, pages 70, 71. † Ibid. pp. 85, 86.

quote, with real delight and with hearty concurrence of feeling, a single sentence or two more:—"With the views I entertain, I feel myself under no restraint. I can say with all freedom, and I do say, to every sinner, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' I can invite all who thirst to come to the waters; assuring them that, coming, they shall not find the fountain dry. I can tell the maimed, the halt, the blind, the promiscuous multitude by the high ways and hedges, that they are bidden to the marriage-supper of the great king; and by way of solicitation, I can add, that the table is prepared, that the oxen and the fatlings are killed, and that all things are ready. If the doctrine I hold left me not at liberty to use such terms,—if it warranted me not to proclaim that the blessings of salvation are free to all, free as the light or the air of heaven, and that every man, of every character may come and partake of them, if he only will; if any doctrine I hold were found, on examination, to embarass me, less or more, in making such an exhibition of the grace of God,—I hesitate not to say, I would relinquish that doctrine: . . . . I would say, This which I hold cannot be right, let me abandon it, and embrace the truth."*—These are noble and admirable sentiments. How far the unlimited invitations and assurances, the pressing

* Ibid. pp. 89, 90.

of which is thus manfully contended for, as a part at once of ministerial freedom and ministerial fidelity, are consistent with the doctrine that there are any among the children of men for whom there is *no atonement*,—that is, no ground on which the very blessings urged upon their acceptance can possibly be obtained and enjoyed by them,—I must leave it to yourselves, after what has already been said, to form your own judgment.—I seem to myself, as if I had a surer and more consistent ground on which to rest my appeal to my fellow-sinners, and to urge upon them their acceptance of pardon and their reconciliation to God,—when I can tell them of an atonement actually made for them all,—from the virtue of which they are neither excluded by any want of sufficiency for them all in its intrinsic merits, nor by any limiting destination of those merits to the expiation of the sins of any definite number. If, in the sense which has been explained, the atonement was for all,—general,—indefinite,—universal,—we can say with freedom, and unhesitatingly, to sinners without difference and without exception, that Christ died *for them ;* —atoned,—made propitiation,—*for them* :—if for *all*, then for *each* :—and if for all and for each, then for *you*, my hearers,—for *every one of you*. I see not on what ground, with any consistency or truth, I could say to any of you, indiscriminately, that there is pardon *for you*, — pardon for *your sins*,—unless I could say that atonement has

been made for those sins; seeing that, unatoned, they could not be forgiven. But, if atonement has been made for the sins of all,—then to all may pardon be freely offered. FOR ALL,—therefore FOR EACH,—is an obvious and immediate conclusion, which, for himself, and for herself, every hearer of the gospel may legitimately and confidently draw. There needs no new atonement,—no "other foundation,"—"no more sacrifice for sin." By that which has already been offered, a full propitiation has been made for the sins of the world. The atonement is universal; but, remember,—not the pardon. The pardon depends on your availing yourselves of the atonement,—on your believing the divine record concerning it, and placing your reliance, humbly and exclusively upon it. "All things," says our inspired apostle, "are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." *

* 2 Cor. v. 18—21.

DISCOURSE IV.

OBSTACLES TO THE SINNER'S SALVATION, EXISTING IN THE SINNER HIMSELF:—RELATION OF THE ATONEMENT TO THEM.—THE SINNER'S ACCOUNTABLENESS:—NATURE OF HIS ABILITY AND HIS INABILITY.

JOHN III. 17.—"FOR GOD SENT NOT HIS SON INTO THE WORLD TO CONDEMN THE WORLD, BUT THAT THE WORLD THROUGH HIM MIGHT BE SAVED."

AFTER a variety of general views, of which it is not any impression of their inferior importance, but solely the want of time, that induces me to waive the recapitulation,—I proceeded, you may remember, in the latter part of last discourse, to consider the universality of the invitations and offers of the gospel, and the relation which these bear to the inquiry respecting the extent of the atonement.—The fact of their universality,—a fact as fully admitted and contended for by those brethren who hold the doctrine of an atonement limited to the elect as it is by ourselves,—was proved by a few passages, as a specimen of many, from the Holy Scriptures. And

my principal object, thereafter, was to show,—first, that there must be a ground on which the invitation to pardon and life can consistently be addressed to all, and the offer of these blessings, in accordance with the truth of things, be freely and indiscriminately made to all:—secondly, that such ground did not exist either in the scheme of limited sufficiency, or in that of limited destination; inasmuch as, both according to the one and to the other of these schemes, there is a vast proportion of mankind for whose sins no atonement has been made; and since (according to the constitution of the gospel, and to the principles of the divine administration as discovered in it) atonement is necessary to pardon, pardon, in regard to the whole of this proportion of mankind, is, by the absence of such atonement, rendered a *natural impossibility*:—whence it follows, that, there being no ground on which pardon, on the part of God, can be bestowed, there is no ground on which sinners indiscriminately can, with any consistency, be invited to the acceptance and enjoyment of it:—and, thirdly, that the only consistent ground, therefore, *for universal invitation*, is *universal atonement*.

I adverted, in last discourse, to the twofold relation in which the blessed God stands to his intelligent and accountable creation;—that of *moral Governor*, and that of *sovereign Benefactor*; and endeavoured to show you, that the former stands first in natural order;—that, coincidently with this,

the first aspect in which the provision of the atonement should be regarded is in its relation to *the race*, as all standing in the position of moral accountableness, guilt, and condemnation,—and to the glory of God, in his character of moral Governor, in offering to these his apostate subjects a free pardon, and the gift of life, instead of the death they deserved to suffer; and that this, accordingly, is the light in which the Saviour himself presents it to our contemplation, in the passage of which I have selected a part as the text, or motto, of our present discourse:—Verses 14–17. "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." It is thus a scheme for *the world*,—for *man*. Taking, then, this enlarged and all-important view of the scheme of redemption, and placing, for the time, the subject of election out of sight, let us see again how the case stands.

The whole scheme, as was shown at the very outset of our discussions, proceeds upon the assumption that "all have sinned;" that SINNER is the generic character of the race, sustained by all its members, in whatever quarter of the world,

and under whatever variety of circumstances.—For these sinful, guilty, and justly condemned subjects of the divine government, salvation is to be provided. In the way of the accomplishment of this salvation there lie *two descriptions of obstacles*. Those of the one class exist in the character of God;—the perfections of that character being virtually the same with the principles of his moral government:—those of the other are found in the character of man,—in the corrupt principles and passions of his fallen nature. These two classes of obstacles are very different in their kind, and may be considered as relating, respectively, to different departments of the same great transaction; departments, of which the one may be characterized as the theoretical, and the other as the practical;—the one consisting in the laying of the ground, or provision of the means,—the other, in the actual efficiency of the means provided, or the bestowment of salvation on the ground thus laid and revealed. The one kind of obstacles requires to be removed in order to the possibility of salvation at all; the other, in order to the actual enjoyment of the salvation by any.—It is the removal of the first class of obstacles,—those which arise from the character and government of God, that is the special province of atonement. This has already been largely shown; and I cannot resume the illustration of it. Atonement secures the honour of public justice in the pardon and salvation

of the guilty. Every obstacle, then, of this kind being by the atonement removed out of the way, the next question comes to be—What else is there between the sinner and pardon,—between the sinner and salvation? And this, both in itself and in its moral bearings, is a question of no ordinary importance. The answer to it, however, is short and simple. The only obstacles, in these circumstances, are such as exist IN THE SINNER HIMSELF.—There are none *in God.* His love to the world,—as we formerly showed you the verse preceding our text teaches us,—having provided full security for the glory of his righteousness in the exercise of his pardoning and saving mercy, that mercy has full scope;—it flows forth, without the slightest intervening impediment;—its fountain-head, and its whole channel, are cleared of every obstruction. Jehovah is now "a just God, and a Saviour,"—"just, and the justifier of him who believeth in "Jesus."—There are none *in the atonement.* It is a general, indefinite atonement,—neither limited in its sufficiency, like a *quid pro quo* payment of debt,—nor limited in its destination to a specific number, so as to render the pardon of any beyond that number a natural impossibility. It is an atonement "*for sin;*" Christ, according to the terms of our former text, having so "put away *sin* by the sacrifice of himself," as that sin, by whomsoever committed, and to whatever amount, may be at once and freely pardoned, having been included

in the universal propitiation.—There are none *in the invitations and offers of the gospel.* In these all is universality and freedom. There are no fetters, no restrictions. The voice of divine Mercy is "to the sons of men," without a single exception or condition. Wherever she finds a man, she finds a sinner; and wherever she finds a sinner, she presents to him, on the ground of the atonement, her offers of pardon, and plies him with the urgency of her entreaties, to accept her gracious proposals:—"Let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."—What, then, I repeat, are the obstacles that lie between the sinner and pardon,—between the sinner and salvation? And again I answer, that they are *in himself,*—in himself *alone,*—and that they are summed up, whatever may be their varieties of modification, in "enmity against God."

What relation, our next inquiry must be, does the atonement bear to this description of obstacles? A relation, I reply, very different from that which it bears to the other. The other it *actually removes.* They lay in the necessary requisition of honour to the perfections of God and the principles of his government; and, that requisition having been met and answered by the atonement, they have ceased to exist. But in no sense at all analogous to this, does the atonement remove the obstacles which

have their place in sinners themselves. When the atonement has been made, and its end has been fully effected in the clearing of the sinner's way to acceptance with God, these still remain in all their inveteracy and force. God is propitiated; he stands, with the out-stretched arms of his love, ready to receive all that will come, —the very chief of transgressors. But sinners themselves are not changed by the making of the atonement. The tidings of its having been made finds them in their sins, in their guilt, their condemnation, their enmity:—and the relation it bears to the obstacles which exist in themselves is that of a MOTIVE OR INDUCEMENT TO THEIR RENUNCIATION.

Such is the light in which, invariably, the propitiatory work of Christ is presented to sinners. Let me direct you to one example. You will find it in 2 Cor. v. 20, 21, "Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."—I offer, on these verses, four remarks:—1. Those whom the inspired "ambassador of Christ" represents himself and his associates as "praying" in the words "Be ye reconciled to God," must be persons, of course, who are still in a state of alienation,—who have not

yet been thus reconciled.*—2. That to which he prays them,—namely, to be "reconciled to God," —means to *come into a state of friendship* with him:—and this includes *two things;*—first, their accepting his offered favour on the ground which had just before been stated, in what the apostle designates "the word of reconciliation," and so having his merited displeasure turned away from them, which is directly included in his "not imputing their trespasses unto them;"—and, secondly, their laying aside their own enmity,—throwing down their weapons of rebellion, desisting from their hostility, and, in the spirit of lowly penitential affection, accepting his proffered love.—3. The motive held out to compliance with the entreaty, is, the assurance of what God has done in the provision of a righteousness for the justification of the ungodly, by the propitiatory substitution of his own Son,—the divine and sinless Saviour:—"*for* he hath made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."—4. It seems to me further evident, that when Paul says "He hath made him who knew no sin to be sin *for us,*" he cannot

* The "*you,*" in both of its occurrences, is supplementary. The apostle is not addressing the Corinthian believers, who were already, like all other believers, in a state of reconciliation; but stating to them the manner in which he discharged his trust,—"praying"—that is, praying *men,* praying *sinners,* praying *aliens,* to be "reconciled unto God."

mean, with any exclusiveness, for us *believers*, or for us *the elect;* inasmuch as, what motive or inducement could it be to the *unreconciled* to accept the reconciliation, or the offered friendship of their God, to tell them that an atonement had been made, and a justifying righteousness provided, *for others?* He must mean, if he means any thing to his purpose, that the provision was made *for them*,—for all whom, wherever he came, he "prayed" in the gracious terms of his commission, "to be reconciled to God,"—for all and for each of them; and that nothing else whatever was necessary to their immediate entrance on a state of favour and friendship with God, than their unconditional submission to his terms,—their willing acceptance of his freely offered mercy, "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

All that I would further say, in regard to the class of obstacles of which I now speak, is—that, in their source and character, they are the very opposite of those which had their subsistence in God. These latter had their origin in the very perfection of the holiness and righteousness of the divine Being;—whereas the former, those in man, arise from the contrariety of his depraved nature to these attributes of the God with whom he has to do,—of his character and of his government;—his aversion, in a word, to God himself, and to the salvation which by the atonement he has provided for him.

It is of essential moment to be borne in mind, that God was *under no obligation* to remove out of the way either the one or the other of these two classes of obstacles;—that, men having become sinners, he might have left them to reap the due penalty of their deeds,—as he did with regard to the "angels which kept not their first estate." Sinners on earth would have had no just cause for complaint, had he acted thus, any more than sinners in hell.—In making provision, then, for human salvation, he has acted in grace,—in the exercise of his eternal self-moving love:—and in making this provision by such means as those which the gospel discloses, he has "done exceeding abundantly above all that either we" ourselves, or any creatures in our behalf, "could have asked or thought." It transcended even angelic estimates of divine beneficence; overwhelming with adoring wonder the "principalities and powers in heavenly places." He has done *his* part for the salvation of men, in a manner infinitely worthy of himself;—"according to the riches of his glory."—And then, let it be further observed,—in making, as he has done, the provision for salvation, by the removal of every obstacle on his own side, he has not only done what he was in no sense bound to do, but has also done, in regard to those for whom the provision was made, *all that was necessary to render them solely and entirely responsible for the use they make of it*, for the treatment it receives from them,—for their

reception or rejection of it, in every instance in which it is set before them,—responsible, that is, for their own salvation or perdition. Let me be clearly understood. I wish to make no half-statements,—far less statements that are, in any degree, equivocal. What I mean is this:—that, with regard to all men to whom the gospel comes, before whom its proposals are laid, and to whom its offers of pardoning mercy are addressed, it is, on the part of God, *put in their option*, or, which is the same thing, *put in their power, to be saved*,—to obtain pardon and life; so that, if they fail of the blessing, *the blame rests exclusively with themselves;* "their blood is upon their own heads."

In the present controversy, as well as in itself, this is a point of vital interest;—and, both from its own nature, and from certain preconceptions which exist in many minds, and which, having the sanction of a supposed orthodoxy, are held with a naturally jealous apprehensiveness,—(an apprehensiveness, which, if not excessive, so as to throw an obstructing film over the mental vision, may, on some grounds, be commendable and useful)—it is not unattended with difficulty. I shall endeavour to set it in as clear a light as I can; and if, in any point, that light can be shown to be other than the light of God as it shines in "the word," I shall be sincerely glad to have my involuntary error scripturally rectified.

Holding, as I formerly announced, the doctrine of *personal election to life*, I yet conceive it to be of

importance to discuss the present question, in the first instance, on the hypothetical ground of there being no such thing. We sometimes, nay many times, hear persons so represent matters, as if, had there been no election, the scheme of salvation must have been altogether abortive, —an entire failure,—having no result.—Now, in one sufficiently obvious sense, this is true. It is election, and consequent divine influence, that ensure actual salvation. But supposing there had been no such thing, *would* the failure have been complete?—*would* there have been no valuable end answered? I should think it a very great mistake to say so. Supposing all had perished,—would no end worthy of God have been effected, if God himself was vindicated in their perdition, under every aspect of his character;—not only as the God of justice, (which he would have been independently of all atonement, and of all provision for man's recovery) —but also, and that most gloriously, as the God of mercy,—of mercy infinite and everlasting?—Would it not have been to his eternal honour, that no sinner should have ground for the slightest surmise against the Being at whose hand he suffered; but that every one who did suffer should be made to feel, that, in every view, the cause of his perdition was in himself; inasmuch as, not only was the law which he had broken, and whose penal sentence he had incurred, unexceptionable both in its requirements and in its sanction, — " holy, just, and

good;"—but the Lawgiver had in his infinite wisdom devised, and in his infinite grace carried into effect, a scheme for the honourable remission of its penalty, and on this ground made him the offer of a free pardon,—not of the commutation merely of his sentence, but of its reversal, from death to life? I ask again, as I did before, was it not a boon to the world from the God of love, as our Lord clearly teaches us to regard it, when for the world salvation was provided by the mission and mediation of God's Son?—and was it not a worthy end, that in the eyes of the intelligent universe, his mercy should thus be magnified, and made to shine out with a lustre so transcendent,—even although none of the sinning creatures to whom its all-gracious offers were made saw fit to accept them?—nay, would not the compassions of the sovereign be made to appear the more signally captivating in the sight of his other intelligent creatures, by their very contrast with the ungrateful and base requital of them on the part of his rebellious human subjects?—and would it not be glorifying to his name, that no victim of his punitive vengeance should be able, on any ground, to impute his perdition either to any failure in justice or to any deficiency in mercy on the part of his Maker and Judge, or should enjoy, in the slightest measure, the consolatory consciousness, of its being, in any view whatever, *not his own fault?*

In all such discussions, it must be obvious to

you, we have to do with those to whom the gospel, revealing the atonement, and proclaiming mercy through its sacrificial blood, actually comes. The mystery of the very partial diffusion of that gospel, after so many centuries,—the consequent continued ignorance of its provisions among so many generations, with their passing millions, of our fellow-men,—and the questions relative to the salvability of the Heathen on the ground though without the knowledge of it,—are points which, how deep soever in interest, do not come within the legitimate limits of our present discussion. They have difficulties of their own; and difficulties which attach to whatever theory of atonement we can adopt.—What I have at present to do with is, not the extent of the knowledge of it, but the extent of its *general design*. I fear there are not a few, who, when they think of the atonement, have got so much into the habit of associating it with the "election of grace," and with the salvation of the elect as the one and only end for which it was made,—that they can see no glory to God in the plan of mercy, on the supposition of this election being set aside;—no glory, that is, unless he had not only removed the obstacles to salvation that lay in his own character and government, but removed those also which lay in the depravity and aversion of the creature,—not only opened and cleared the way to his favour and his throne,—but also conquered the guilty unwillingness of the rebel to avail himself of the way

which had thus been cleared;—that but for this, Christ would have "died in vain."—It is worthy of remark, however, that when Paul, in his reasoning in support of the doctrine of justification by faith without works of law, introduces the supposition of Christ having "died in vain," the hypothetical ground on which he rests his conclusion is not at all a ground of this description. Mark what he says —Gal. ii. 21, "I do not frustrate the grace of God; for *if righteousness come by the law*, then Christ is dead in vain."—This, you perceive, relates, not to any necessity for the actual application of the atonement in its saving virtue in order to establish the divine propriety of Christ's death,—but to the very principle and foundation of the scheme of atonement itself. Could men have been justified in any other way,—could they have made out for themselves a title of acceptance in terms of law,—then would there have been no need for another ground of justification; and the whole plan of salvation by grace through the incarnation and atoning death of a divine Mediator, would have been a useless expenditure of means, and means the most stupendous, for the attainment of an end which could have been effected without them.—But Christ has *not* died in vain. The apostle's hypothetical statement is a strong negation of the possibility of "righteousness coming by the law." "All have sinned." All are condemned. "As many as are of the works of the law"—that is, as

many as are seeking justification by the doing of them,—"are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." All, therefore, who are justified, must be "justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." And the gospel sets before all an atonement which has been made for all, and a righteousness that is adequate for the justification of all, and is freely offered to all for that end:—and all to whom the message comes, are invited and commanded to believe and live. "The righteousness which is of God by faith" is "*unto* all" in the proclamation and offer of the gospel; and it is "*upon* all them that believe," for actual "justification of life."

Setting election, then, for the time aside, and looking at the gospel as it invariably appears in all the records of apostolic preaching, as a scheme, not for the justification of *the elect, as elect,* but for the justification of *sinners, as sinners,* and of all sinners alike, there being "no difference" either as to the *need* or as to the *freeness* of the pardon it proclaims; let us see how the case stands,—what the precise relation is, between the atonement and human accountableness.—The unfettered freeness of the apostolic proclamation of mercy was in full harmony with the statement of their divine Master in our text,—where he clearly intimates that the salvation which the Father, in his love to the world,

had commissioned him to work, was *for the world;* —and with his express injunctions that they should "go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;"—"that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." Mark xvi. 16. Luke xxiv. 47. I showed you, in last discourse, that "*the world*" must, in each of its occurrences in our text, be understood in the same extent of meaning,—that is, in its widest latitude. And the text, in this respect, does not stand alone:—there is the same description of antithesis, and the same evidence of identity in the extent of the term's comprehensiveness, in other passages; as when our Lord says—John xii. 47. "I came, not to judge the world, but to save the world." The world that is to be judged by him, must be the same as the world which he came to save. Be it so, that it means Jews and Gentiles; it does not mean a certain number of each, but Jews and Gentiles universally, and without difference. The gospel brings salvation near to all. It puts salvation, I repeat, in the power and at the option of every sinner that hears it. It tells that sinner, that there is atonement *for him,*—pardon *for him,*—salvation *for him.*—The question now before us, then, is—When the salvation *is* thus brought near,—when the offer of pardon, on the ground of the Redeemer's atonement, is thus freely made,—*what becomes that sinner's responsibility?*—To what extent is

every such sinner accountable for his own salvation, or his own perdition?

On this subject, we hear a great deal about human INABILITY. No term is in more common use; but few terms, there is reason to fear, are used with a smaller amount of clearness and definiteness of meaning,—or rather, I should say, with a larger amount of delusive and ruinous vagueness. By the reckless use of this term, men have, to a melancholy extent, deceived themselves, and deceived one another; and the impositions which the human heart has thus practised upon itself are among the most affecting proofs of the truth of the divine description of it, as "deceitful above all things."

When, on the subject of moral sentiment and moral action, we use the term *inability*, and phraseology in accordance with it, we employ language sufficiently natural, but language which will not bear to be interpreted with literal strictness. On all other subjects than those connected with religion, every one is aware of this; nor is any person ever misled by it, or ever at a loss to understand it. For example:—we say, respecting a man of high probity and honour, the strength of whose moral principle has been tested and approved, that he *cannot* do a mean or a dishonest thing. When we say so, what do we mean? Certainly not that he is destitute of the physical power to put forth his hand to steal; or that he has not the power to affix his signature to a fictitious Bill; or that he has not the

power to utter with his tongue the words of falsehood, of defamation, or of selfishness. What we mean, and what we express, is neither more nor less than *the strength of his principle of rectitude.* We mean, not that he is naturally or physically, but that he is *morally*—that is, by the force of principle,—incapable of the theft, the forgery, the lie, or the slander. And do we think the less of him for this? Assuredly not. The greater the evidence we have had of this force of principle, and the greater, consequently, the confidence with which we can unhesitatingly affirm—"he *cannot*,"—so much the more highly do we think of him; and the rise in our admiring estimate of his moral worth, is marked by the degree of emphasis with which we make the affirmation.—Rise, then, upward. Carry the principle of your estimate to the highest point in the scale;—or rather, apply it to him whom it would be dishonouring to bring into the scale at all,—holding, as he does, a place by himself, at an elevation infinitely above any graduation of ours. We say of God,—his own word says it of Him,—that He "*cannot lie*,"—that he *cannot* do aught that is evil.—I again ask, What do we mean? That He has not physical power,—power, properly so called? No, certainly. When we have risen to the elevation of Deity, this description of power has augmented to infinitude. There is the power of Him with whom "nothing is impossible:"—and, were it but conceivable that it should be associated with a

principle of malignity, or moral pravity,—the extent of the evil which it would be capable of effecting could be measured only by the extent of the existing universe, and by the possibilities of additional creation. What we mean, then, with regard to God, when we use terms expressive of inability, is just what we meant before, only that the degree in which we now convey the meaning has become infinite :—we mean *the infinite force, and the immutable permanence, in Deity, of the principle of moral rectitude.* These are such as perfectly, absolutely, and for ever, to ensure the application of the physical power to what is morally right, and to that alone,—what is in harmony with the eternal and essential purity of the divine nature.—And when we have arrived at the conclusion that he is essentially and necessarily holy,—so that we cannot associate with his character, or with his administration, the idea of evil, without, in the same moment, losing that of divinity,—do we think the less highly of God? I need not answer the question. It would be impiety so much as to suppose it to require an answer.

Take, then, the other side of the case. We apply the same modes of expression in the descending as well as in the ascending scale. We are wont to say of a habitual and inveterate liar, that he *cannot* speak truth ;—and of a habitual and inveterate swearer, that he *cannot* speak without an oath. What do we mean? Not, in the one case, that the tongue of the liar is less capable of giving

utterance to words of truth than to words of falsehood,—not, in the other, that the lips of the swearer are less capable of framing themselves to the terms of piety than to those of blasphemy. We only use a forcible form of expressing the *strength of the disposition or propensity to evil,*—to lying, and to profanity.—It is on this principle that it is said of Joseph's brethren, when under the dominion of hatred and malicious envy, that "they *could not* speak peaceably to him.—And it is on the same principle that our Lord frames the question to the Scribes and Pharisees—"How *can* ye, being evil, speak good things?"—Here too, then, go downward to the lowest point in the scale. What do we mean, when we say of Satan, that he *cannot* do a good or benevolent action? Do we mean, that he has no natural or physical ability? He has the powers of a fallen angel,—powers, mighty for mischief,—and wanting only a new principle or disposition, to make it apparent how mighty they would again be for good,—as they were before he fell. His fall did not deprive him of power,—whether physical or intellectual. It might diminish both; but it destroyed not either. It only brought both under a wrong influence,—under the sway of an evil disposition. Do we, then, think the less badly of Satan,—do we regard him with the less of the sentiment of condemnation or the feeling of moral abhorrence, when we thus conceive of him as under the domination of an

enmity to God and to goodness so deep, so settled, so inveterate, that, in the nervous terms of the poet of Paradise Lost, "evil" has become "his good," —and of a malignity so fearful that the joy of others is his misery, and the misery of others his joy; and that, under the influence of such dispositions, he is incapable of any action either morally good or socially kind and beneficent? And here too the answer is—Certainly not. As it was in the former case, so is it in this. In the former, we arrived, in our ascent, at the highest possible excellence;—in this, we arrive, in our descent, at the deepest possible depravity.

Be it borne in mind, then, that when, in regard to what is morally and spiritually good, we ascribe *inability* to men,—we ought to mean, and to be understood as meaning, inability in its origin and nature entirely moral,—not physical, not intellectual, but solely moral.—In order to just accountableness, three things are evidently indispensable: —*means of knowledge and impression; capacity of knowing and being impressed;* and *power to act according to the knowledge and impression.*— These things are clearly necessary to all reasonable responsibility. Without ability to know, and ability to act, there can be no such thing. Where such ability ends, accountableness ends. We are immediately sensible of this, in the case of *infants*, and of *idiots*. We are instantly alive to the conviction, that, according as there is less and less of

natural capacity and power, there is less and less of responsibility; and *where both cease, responsibility is at an end;* unless in so far as the loss of the power has been the consequence of the operation of moral causes.—Whatever have been the effects of the entrance of sin, and the fall of man, the loss of *natural ability* cannot have been one of them:—for in that case, the moment of the entrance of sin would have been the moment of the cessation of accountableness. If by sin man had lost the natural power either of knowing truth or of doing duty,—then, although the subject of guilt for the one act by which the power was lost,—that one act having been done by him when in possession of the power,—he must have ceased to be capable of contracting guilt from that day forward; for there can be no guilt where there is no moral accountableness,—and there can be no such accountableness where there is no power.

I wish, then, to be clearly understood. I believe and affirm, that, in regard to divine truth and spiritual things, there is no inability in man to discern and believe the one, and to receive and enjoy the other, save that which consists in, or arises from, the state of his *moral disposition,*—the *aversion of his will* from that which is holy and good;—in a word, that human *inability* is human *unwillingness,*—nothing else,—nothing less,—nothing more;—and that *inability* is just a strong word for expressing the *degree* of the unwillingness and

indisposition. "There is an essential difference," says Mr Fuller, "between an inability which is independent of the inclination, and one that is owing to nothing else." There is indeed; and on all other subjects but religion,—in all cases connected with the conduct and the interests of ordinary life,—the distinction between the one and the other, —which is just the distinction between natural and moral inability,—is by all understood, by all acknowledged, and by all taken into account in their estimate of the character of actions, and of their desert of praise or of blame.

I make the supposition, then, that the gospel is proclaimed to men in its divine simplicity. What is there in it which they have not natural capacity to understand? When they are told that God has given them a law, spiritual in its character, "holy, just, and good" in its requirements;—that that law pronounces a curse, and a sentence of death, on all who break it;—that they themselves have broken it, and are under this curse and this sentence;—that from this state of condemnation and exposure to death, they are utterly incapable of delivering themselves, and that, in this view of it, their case is hopeless;—that the God whose law they have violated has "in wrath remembered mercy,"—has spontaneously, in infinite benevolence, interposed for their salvation,—has sent his Son to seek and to save that which was lost,—or, in the terms preceding our text, has "so loved the world as to

give his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life;" —that by his sufferings unto death upon the cross this divine Mediator has made a complete atonement for human guilt, an atonement which secures the glory of God in the forgiveness of men, and an atonement which leaves no sinner on earth, who hears of it, without a ground on which he may obtain the immediate and free pardon of all his sins, full acceptance with God, and eternal life,—all of grace, to the exclusion of boasting,—and all for the sake of him who has offered the atonement, and of his satisfaction in whose finished work God has "given assurance unto all men by raising him from the dead."—These, and other collateral statements of gospel truth, are quite sufficiently intelligible. So far as their *meaning* is concerned, there is no difficulty in understanding them.—And we affirm, without qualification or exception, that the sole reason why men do not discern them in their divine excellence, and accept them as divinely true and divinely adapted to their exigences,—is the absence of a right disposition,—is the enmity of the carnal mind against God,—is "an *evil heart* of unbelief." — So far as natural capacity is concerned, it is equally necessary to unbelief as to faith. If there were a want of natural capacity for believing, there would be equally a want of natural capacity for disbelieving. If there were not this kind of ability to believe, there would be

no guilt in unbelief.—O my fellow-sinners, deceive not yourselves, as multitudes have done before you, with this plea of *inability*. The plea is often advanced with a levity of spirit, that sufficiently indicates its origin. "We cannot, it seems, help ourselves,"—many have thought and said,—"we have no ability to do any thing; we cannot change our own hearts; we cannot atone for our sins; we cannot come to God; we cannot believe:—it is divine power, divine grace, that must do the work:—it is not ours:—and if God is not pleased to put forth the necessary power,—what can we do?—There is no help for us:—we must be damned!"—And with the last fearful link of the chain there is secretly associated a self-flattering hope,—a hope founded in the unreasonableness and unrighteousness of such a doom,—that it shall *not* be so. This, I apprehend, is uniformly involved in the real or affected carelessness with which the conclusion,—a conclusion in itself so unspeakably fearful,—is usually uttered. The mind rests its hope secretly on the *unfairness* that *inability should incur condemnation*. The inward surmise is:—"if we really are unable, then every effort of ours must be unavailing; perdition is entailed upon us, and by nothing that we can do is it avoidable:—and yet—and yet—*is this justice?*—and—if it be not justice, *can it be true?*"

Now, my fellow-sinners, this is all delusion. I come to the point at once; and, with all diffidence,

yet with all confidence, I say to you,—if there were no ability, it would *not* be justice. But in the sense in which you urge the plea, and in which, perhaps, it has been put into your lips, there is no truth in it. In the sense in which you plead inability,—the only sense in which the plea could be of any avail to you,—you are *not* unable. So far from being unable in any sense that even palliates your unbelief and impenitence,—your *inability*, rightly interpreted, resolves itself into the strongest mode of expressing your culpability and guilt. For what does the word mean?—simply, the *strength of your antipathy to God and to goodness*. Your inability to believe is only another phrase for your aversion to the truth of God. Your inability to "repent, and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance," what else is it, less or more, than your fondness for the service of sin and of the world, and your unwillingness to relinquish it?—what is it, but that you cannot give up the world;—you cannot renounce your favourite sins;—you cannot abandon "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life;" or you cannot bear the mortification of pride, the renunciation of your own righteousness, the crucifixion of self?—What is there in your *cannot*, but the want of *will?*—If you tell me you are *willing* but *not able*, you tell me what never has been, and never can be; what involves, indeed, a flat and palpable contradiction; inasmuch as, the inability affirmed in Scripture

being unwillingness, and nothing else whatever, it amounts to neither more nor less than saying that you are willing and unwilling at the same time. To say you *would* believe if you *could*,—is not only not true; it is the precise opposite of truth. The plain truth is, that you *could* believe if you *would*; there being no one thing whatever that prevents you from believing, but the *want of will*; there being nothing between you and pardon but the want of will to have it in God's way,—that is, by grace on his part, and in connexion with holiness and newness of life on yours.—"I would but can't believe"—"I would but can't repent,"—are, both of them, as unsound philosophy as they are unsound divinity. If in any instance either were true, there would, in that instance, be no guilt in unbelief and impenitence. It is the will that is wanting, and the will only. The will to believe is, virtually, faith; the will to repent is, virtually, penitence. There never has been the will to either, where there have not actually been both.

In appointing and accepting the atonement, and in offering you pardon on account of it, if you are willing to receive the pardon on that ground, God has put the blessing in your power. Who is to blame, if you have it not? Not He assuredly; but yourselves, and yourselves alone.—*What would you have?* You have all the natural faculties and powers, that are necessary to constitute a ground of accountableness. You have the natural

powers required for considering, understanding, believing, choosing, loving and hating, speaking, and acting; — and moreover for asking. The question, then, is, How comes it that these powers are not occupied about proper objects? — how comes it that they are not rightly directed?— Take them in order. You have the power of *considering*:—why is it that you do not consider "the things that belong unto your peace,"—the things which, of all others, you cannot but be sensible, ought the most, both in duty and in interest, to be considered by you?—You have the power of *understanding*:—how is it, that you do not understand the divine testimony;—that is, that you do not perceive and appreciate its excellence, and its adaptation both to God's character and to man's need? "Why, even of yourselves, judge ye not that which is right?"—You have the power of *believing*,—of crediting what is attested by sufficient evidence. You are practising this every day and every hour, on other subjects. How is it, that you do not believe the word of God,—the glorious gospel,—"the word of reconciliation," of peace with God through the atoning blood of the cross? Is it because you have examined its evidence, and satisfactorily proved it untrue? or is it because, in its humbling and holy character, it is not to your liking? Let conscience give a faithful answer.—You have the power of *choosing*:—you are exercising it con-

tinually. How is it that, among the objects presented for your selection, you do not "choose the good part that shall never be taken from you?"—You have the natural power of *loving*, and of *hating*:—how is it, that you do not love God, love Christ, love holiness?—and how is it, that you do not hate sin, and "abhor that which is evil?"—how is it that your love and your hatred are not in harmony with those of God,—that you do not hate what he hates, and love what he loves?—You have the natural power of *speaking* and *acting*:—why is it, that you do not always speak and act aright?—I have added to all these—You have the power of *asking*:—yes; and with the power, you have the liberty, in the quarter where most it behoves you to apply; and more even than liberty,—earnest invitation, and all the encouragement of faithful promise:—how is it, then, that you do not ask of God?—How is it that you come not to him for the influences of his Spirit, and for the blessings of his salvation?—how is it, that when these blessings are set before you, on the ground of the atonement, in all their fulness and in all their freeness, you do not eagerly and gratefully accept them?—that when the way is opened to the mercy-seat, through the rending of the vail even the Redeemer's flesh, (Heb. x. 20.) you do not press towards it?—that when "in Christ reconciling the world unto himself," he beseeches you to be reconciled to him,

you do not catch with all avidity at the gracious entreaty, and come into friendship with your justly offended God?—O delude not your own souls, I repeat, by talking of *inability*. Is there any other answer that can truly, in the tribunal of conscience, be given to such questions, but one—that you have "*no heart*" to these things,—to the truths, to the ways, to the service, or to the enjoyment of God? "Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it." Prov. xvii. 16. And if this aversion of heart,—this perverseness of disposition,—this want of will to that which is good,—be not sinful, then is there no such thing as sin in the universe,—no moral evil, or criminal desert,—nothing on account of which any creature can be condemned or punished.

I again ask, *what would you have?* Every consideration that is calculated to influence and determine the choice of your mind, is set before you;—every thing fearful on the one side, every thing truly desirable on the other. The terrors of coming wrath are depicted, to induce you to flee from them, and effect a timely escape; and the way of escape is set open before you. All that is, or ought to be, attractive in the beauties of holiness,—in the prospect of "fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore,"—in a God who "delighteth in mercy," and whose very nature is "love,"—in a Saviour as willing as he is able, and as able as he

is willing, to "save you to the uttermost,"—in an atonement whose infinite virtue is for all,—in the forgiveness of sin, fellowship with God, and the reciprocations of mutual love between the renewed soul and the divine source of all blessing;—in all that is comprehended in life eternal!—*What would you have?* The most sincere and earnest invitations are addressed to you, assuring you of the divine readiness to receive and to bless you:—and every one of these invitations proceeds upon the assumption, that there is nothing between you and the enjoyment of the blessings to which you are invited, but *your own will.* Jehovah—the God with whom it is impossible to lie, swears to you by the certainty and necessity of his own being—"As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his wicked way, and live:—turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?" and Jesus, the divine Saviour, pleads with, and entreats, and encourages you—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."——*What would you have?* What more is necessary to constitute a valid ground of responsibility?—think,—and say,—what more is there required?—what is wanting?—There is nothing remaining, that I can conceive of, but your being *made willing.* Will you say that *this* is necessary to your accountableness? If you wish to retain your claim to rationality, you will never advance such a plea. Think a moment,

—a moment will be enough,—of its self-contradictory absurdity:—that it should be necessary for you to be *made willing*, in order to your becoming accountable for being *unwilling!*—that a right disposition requires to be imparted, in order to your being responsible for cherishing and indulging a wrong one!—And yet, gross as is the absurdity of the sentiment, it is greatly to be feared that some impious surmise of this kind floats in many minds,—that unless God give them a right disposition, *they cannot help it*. But the entire Bible proceeds on the assumption that the wrong disposition is your sin,—existing and operating wilfully, resisting the inducements to its suppression and crucifixion, and neither desiring nor seeking divine aid to effect it.—*What would you have?* You are neither compelled to evil, nor forcibly restrained from good. You voluntarily choose the one; you voluntarily refuse the other. It is a matter of consciously spontaneous preference. *What, then,* I still urge upon you, *would you have?* You cannot be saved against your will. You cannot have your hearts changed against your will. You cannot be made willing against your will! You have all the powers before enumerated:—you have all conceivable motives presented to you, to exercise those powers aright,—in the choice, the love, the pursuit, and the enjoyment of right and worthy objects:—you are under no compulsory and no withholding power. Why, then, I repeat, do you remain at a distance

from God, when he invites you to his presence and his favour? Why are you not interested in the virtue of the atonement, when you are assured that its virtue is free to you and to all?—Why are you not partakers of the blessings of God's salvation, when these, in all the free munificence of the Godhead, are set before you, and pressed upon your acceptance? Why are you not in the way to heaven, when the gate is thrown wide, and entrance not permitted merely, but urged?—*Who*, or *what*, prevents you?—WHO? *Not God:* he invites, entreats, prays you, and, with the sceptre of his grace extended, waits for you, that you may touch it, and live.—*Not Christ.* He has shed his blood for sinners, and for you among the rest:—he sets himself before you, crucified and slain:—he shows you, his hands and his side," and says "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."—WHAT, then, prevents you? Nothing whatever, in the form of obstacle, lies in your way,—save those obstacles which are thrown there by the devil, the world, and the flesh, operating upon your earthly and corrupt affections, and indisposing you to leave the broad way and enter the narrow:—that is, there is nothing but the strong antagonist power of your inclination to sense and sin. The sole obstacle is to be found in the words—"*Ye will not.*" Do not delude yourselves by fancying there is any thing else. Cheat not your souls with words. Believe not those who would lay your consciences

to sleep on the pillow of an imaginary inability. Unwillingness is the word. It is the inability of disinclination,—of alienation of heart; *moral* inability. You *can*, but *will not*, is the truth;—or, if you like it better, though it is the same thing, —you cannot, *because* you will not.

The principle which I have thus been endeavouring to establish, we find repeatedly and strongly affirmed and sanctioned by the authority of Christ himself. I call your attention to one remarkable instance. It occurs in John v. 39–44.—"Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. I receive not honour from men. But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?" This is a very conclusive passage to our purpose. Our Lord first complains of their *unwillingness*,—Verse 40, "Ye will not come unto me:"—he then traces this unwillingness to its *moral cause*—Verse 42, "I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you:"—he thirdly *identifies this unwillingness with inability*—Verse 44, "How can ye believe?"—and, last of all, he traces this inability too to the same description of source or origin with that to which he had

ascribed their unwillingness—to the operation of *moral causes*,—especially, to their "love of this present world"—Verse 44, "How can ye believe, who receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?"—This illustration, therefore, of the identity of unwillingness and inability, is very complete. The Bible, indeed, is uniform in all its representations of this matter. All its appeals, admonitions, invitations, and threatenings, proceed upon the principle for which we contend. They all assume that it is the *will* that is wanting, that it is the *disposition* that is in fault, that it is the *heart* that blinds and perverts the judgment. And in directing our minds to the close of all things,—to "the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God,"—it teaches us the all-important lesson, that in that great day, the ground of condemnation to the ungodly will not be anything respecting which the Supreme Judge will say —"Ye *could* not,"—but invariably what will admit of his saying—and will constrain him to say, with the determination of justice, though with the reluctance of mercy—"Ye *would* not." There will be no such tantalizing and taunting charges as the former:—the latter will send away with a full consciousness of desert all the transgressors on whom it will be pronounced.—No gospel-hearer will perish in that day, who had it not put in his power to choose the life rather than the death,—to choose whether he would be saved or lost:—and of all on

whom the sentence of perdition is passed, "this will be the condemnation, that light came into the world," and came *to them*, and they "loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

In all this illustration and argument, I have two objects;—*first*, the personal conviction of any of my hearers, in whose minds a misconception of the nature of the inability that keeps sinners from an interest in the virtue of the Saviour's atonement, and in the pardoning mercy of God, may have found place, and may have been lulling their consciences to a deceitful and perilous repose,—tempting them to say to themselves "peace, peace!" when there was no peace:—and *secondly*, to settle the great general principle, so important in the present discussion, that, on the supposition of there having been no election;—and on the further supposition of God, by his accredited word and messengers, having made the offer of free pardon to the whole world,—to all the successive generations of mankind, on the ground of a universal atonement;—and still further, of all, without exception, having refused the offer, and finally perished;—the blame of their perdition would, without a single exception, have lain with the sinners themselves. They would have perished, solely through their own perverseness. They would have been self-ruined. The mercy of God would have been glorified in providing the ground,

and publishing the offer, and urging the acceptance, of pardon and life ; while equal infatuation and guilt would have characterized their rejection of it. —I plead for God. In this, as in everything, God must be cleared, and the guilt left with the sinner. I know not a more perilous posture of mind in which transgressors can be left, than that in which they indulge the fancy of their doing, or of their having done, all that they could,—and of the blame, wheresoever it may lie, not being theirs, seeing they have done their part, if God does not do his. Some speak thus. Many more feel thus. But the language and the thought are alike impious. To encourage it, is at once to dishonour God, and to delude and ruin men.

But "the God of all grace" has been pleased, not only thus to glorify himself in providing, by means of the atonement, an honourable ground of pardon, and in publishing this ground and offering pardon to all,—but to make provision still further for securing a certain amount of actual salvation from the atonement, by determining a special influence, of spiritual illumination and converting power, to an extent limited by his own sovereign pleasure, but embracing a "multitude which no man can number, out of all peoples, and kindreds, and nations, and tongues."—The questions relative to the speciality of the divine love to such, and of the divine purpose concerning them, *in the making of the atonement*,—on which a good deal

of the present controversy has been made to turn, —I find it will be necessary still to postpone.—I shall begin next discourse with this point; and it will immediately and naturally lead me to the attempt I promised to make, at balancing accounts between the parties, and showing the extent of their agreement, and the extent of their difference. The question will then also come in for a brief notice,—whether the sovereign purpose of God respecting some makes any difference in the ground and the justice of the condemnation of others,— or whether it operates, in any manner or in any degree, as a *preventive* of their salvation.

DISCOURSE V.

FURTHER REMARKS ON MORAL INABILITY.—DIVINE DECREES.—BEARING OF THESE ON THE DOCTRINE OF ATONEMENT, AND ON HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY.—SUMMARY OF AGREEMENT AND DIFFERENCE.

GAL. I. 8, 9.—"BUT THOUGH WE, OR AN ANGEL FROM HEAVEN, PREACH ANY OTHER GOSPEL UNTO YOU THAN THAT WHICH WE HAVE PREACHED UNTO YOU, LET HIM BE ACCURSED. AS WE SAID BEFORE, SO SAY I NOW AGAIN, IF ANY MAN PREACH ANY OTHER GOSPEL UNTO YOU THAN THAT YE HAVE RECEIVED, LET HIM BE ACCURSED."

THE greater part of last Discourse, you may remember, was occupied, with the discussion of the question, in many views so important, respecting human ability and human inability, in the department of spiritual interests and spiritual duties; and especially in regard to compliance with the invitations of the gospel. It is a maxim of justice, self-evidently necessary for the vindication of the divine government in condemning for disobedience and unbelief, that some such ability there must be as to constitute a valid ground of accountableness; —inasmuch as, justice there can be none, in calling to account, and inflicting punishment, for not doing

what there is no ability to do. I endeavoured to show you that there is such ability; that there is all, in kind and in degree, that is necessary to render men legitimately responsible, both for their disobedience to the law and their rejection of the gospel; and that the only inability that is imputed to them in the word of God, or that is at all consistent with their being accountable agents, is the moral inability arising from, or rather, I would say, identical with, disinclination,—perversity of disposition,—aversion of heart;—nothing else, and nothing more.—The discussion of this point was indispensable, from its intimate connexion with our previous representations of the atonement, or of the great mediatorial work of the Son of God, in its general aspect towards the world, as well as with the vindication of the divine glory in offering pardon and salvation on account of it, to sinners of mankind indiscriminately and universally.

Two things, as then remarked, were manifestly requisite:—*First*,—a ground, in reference to God, on which pardon might be thus offered to all consistently with the honour of his character and government. That ground, we saw, consisted in atonement, and universal atonement; atonement, in order to its being offered to *any*,—universal atonement, in order to its being offered to *all*:—*Secondly*,—a ground in reference to Man, on which, with divine authority, he might consistently be invited and commanded to accept it, and justly

punished for the non-acceptance of it. This latter ground seems to me plainly to lie in the possession, on the part of man, of *natural ability*;—the possession, that is, of all the natural powers necessary for understanding and believing divine truth, and for receiving and enjoying divine blessings; so that, with regard to such reception and enjoyment, it might be truly affirmed of every gospel-hearer—he *may*, if he *will*;—the sole hindrance lying in the will, or, which is the same thing, in the disposition as influencing and determining its volitions.

Your time will not admit of further recapitulation.—Against such statements the outcry of *pelagianism* and *arminianism* will of course be raised:—but it will be raised by none but the ignorant and the inconsiderate. There is nothing in them either pelagian or arminian. And, if there were, I have long learned to make very light account of every imputation but that of *anti-scripturism*. If the charge is brought against me of misrepresenting the inspired Apostles, I shall give it, with a deep consciousness of my liability to err, the gravest and most deliberate consideration;—but if the charge be that only of having given statements which are not in accordance with this or the other human system, I shall not count it worth my while to repudiate it; inasmuch as every man has the same right to form his own views of the doctrines contained in this book of God as the framers of those systems themselves had.

Well, then,—taking up the question on Bible grounds,—it may be asked and urged,—are not men said to be "dead in trespasses and sins?"—and does it not fairly follow, that, in this state, they are as incapable of any spiritual exercise and action, as a dead man is of any of the functions of animal life?—I answer:—it is true that men are "dead in trespasses and sins;" and that there is some analogy between spiritual and natural death:—but the analogy has been pressed to a pernicious extreme,—an extreme incapable of reconciliation with human responsibility, or with common sense. Allow me an additional remark or two on this point.—1. The death of which the apostle speaks in the passage referred to (Eph. ii. 1—3,) is a living death,—the death of a still intelligent, conscious, and accountable agent—an agent who, though dead, "walks,"—maintains, that is, a particular course of conduct:—"Ye were *dead* in trespasses and sins,—wherein, in time past, *ye walked*, according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the *children of disobedience*."—2. There are two senses in which the epithet "*dead*" may legitimately be understood. In the first place, it means *dead in law;* sentenced, doomed to death; on the same principle on which we are accustomed to speak of any felon on whom the verdict of capital delinquency has been pronounced, as by that verdict, which fixes the hour and ensures the certainty of his execution, *a dead*

man :—and, in the second place, what is more to our present purpose, it signifies *spiritually dead*. But what is it to be spiritually dead? Does it mean any thing else than being dead to the influence and exercise of those holy affections and moral sensibilities which belonged to human nature in its original purity? I presume not. Now, when this is analysed, it will be found to be identically the same thing with the aversion of heart, the enmity against God, the disinclination to holiness, of which we have been speaking; an aversion, an enmity, a disinclination, manifesting itself by actual indulgence in the various modes of trespass and sin, by "walking according to the course of this world," by living "as children of disobedience,—in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind." The inability involved in such a death, I need hardly say, is obviously and entirely of a moral kind. In this view of inability, we neither deny nor vindicate it. It is in its nature criminal,—else, as we formerly observed, there is no sin and no guilt in the universe. And it is the criminal cause of a criminal effect ;—sinful aversion of heart producing sinful unbelief, the sinful rejection of offered grace. We repeat our firm conviction, that in none of the representations of this matter to be found in the Scriptures is there aught that can be construed as implying more, in the cause of any sinner's refusal of gospel salvation, than this heart-hatred of what

is spiritually good. The practice of pressing to an extreme the analogy between this spiritual death and the death of the body,—so as to leave sinners under the impression of the two being the same in kind, and consequently of their inability for the exercise of any of the functions of the former rendering them as little accountable for the non-exercise of those functions, as are the subjects of the latter—the dead in their graves—for their incapacity to use their arms or their limbs in the activities of animal life,—has been productive of a vast amount of misconception, self-delusion, and ruin.

It would be endless for me to enter into the discussion of all the topics that bear a legitimate relation to the one immediately before us. The truth is, the entire system of divine doctrine might thus be introduced; and no one, perhaps, might be able to say that any part of it was altogether irrelevant. I must hasten forward.—*The universality of human sinfulness* is a matter of fact, which, we are satisfied, even on philosophical grounds, cannot be reasonably accounted for otherwise than by admitting the effect—the judicial effect—on human nature, of the fall from original righteousness, when the first Adam gave way before temptation. Into the demonstration of this, however, it were vain to think of entering. The field is by much too extensive to admit of our doing so.—All that can at present be said is,—that, whatever view we take of

the precise nature and amount of the judicial effect referred to,—and whatever theory we form on the confessedly difficult subject of the transmission of original corruption,—it must to all be sufficiently obvious, that the actual possession and influence of holy desires and affections can never be necessary to render man responsible for the want of them. This were clearly self-contradictory. What is necessary to such accountableness is, a capacity for knowing and loving God,—along with sufficient means of the knowledge, and sufficient motives to the love. All these every man on earth has; and especially they who are in possession of revelation,—to whom the message of the gospel has come. The absence of the knowledge, where the means are enjoyed, is sinful; and, love to God being the first principle of his law, essential to the whole, and pervading every part, the absence of such love is the spirit and sum of all transgression of the law. To this love there must lie an imperative obligation, wherever there is reason; and of this first of obligations the absence of the love is the virtual infraction.—But, what difficulties soever may invest the subject of natural depravity, I feel it quite enough for my present purpose, to be able to appeal (as with all confidence I can do) to the consciousness of every sinner on earth, for the *wilfulness* of all his disobedience, and especially of his refusal of the salvation offered by the gospel, —a wilfulness arising from dislike of its nature,

dislike of its ground, or dislike of any of the required evidences of its possession.

I reckon it a matter of primary moment, to establish the responsibility of all who hear the message of pardoning mercy, for the reception they give to it; to establish this, as previous to, and independent of, all reference to the doctrine of *election*. The plain reason is, that, when we have settled this point previously and independently, that doctrine *will make no change*, but will leave the responsibility as it was before. If all who have the gospel offer made to them are accountable for the attention or the indifference, the favour or the aversion, the acceptance or the refusal, with which they meet and treat it,—if all are culpable, and justly liable to condemnation for the latter of the two modes of entertaining it,—then the difference made by sovereign favour between a part and the rest, leaves the rest under the same responsibility as before,—affects not their culpability,—alters not in one iota the righteousness of their sentence. The pardon, by royal clemency, of one out of a number of malefactors who are all, with equal desert and equal justice, lying under a common sentence of death, does not render the crime of the remainder less worthy of death than it previously was. They still "receive the due reward of their deeds." If there was equity in their sentence before, there is equity in it still. The sovereign exercise of mercy is an unquestionable and inalienable prerogative

of Deity:—but there could be no such thing as sovereign mercy,—and, since all mercy must be sovereign, there could be no such thing as mercy at all, if it could not be exercised towards one, without converting equity into iniquity in the condemnation and punishment of others. This would lay an obligation upon the supreme Ruler either to save all or to punish all;—an obligation, the idea of which can be tolerable to no mind that is in any degree under the influence of the "godly fear" which is due to Him who says—"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

I have formerly avowed my firm belief in the doctrine of election,—personal election to salvation,—as a doctrine of scripture. The grounds of that belief it is not, in the present controversy, necessary for me to detail; inasmuch as the parties in the controversy are, on this particular point, of one mind.—There is still, however, on the subject of election, an important question before us. I do not now revert to the inquiry, whether, in the decrees of God, atonement preceded election, or election atonement. Of that inquiry I have formerly endeavoured satisfactorily to dispose. The question to which I now advert, is this:—Supposing the order of God's purposes to be,—not, having first fixed the number of the elect, to provide atonement for them, and for them only,—but having, in order to satisfy the claims of public justice, and to

secure the honour of his character and government, in the remission of sin and the salvation of sinners, determined on and provided a general or indefinite atonement,—such an atonement as should be a consistent ground of invitation to sinners universally,—to ensure the efficacy of that atonement, in certain special instances, by the sovereign interposition of a direct divine influence,—the enlightening and regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit; —whether, supposing this latter to be (as I believe it to be) the true state of the case, this purpose of election made any difference *in the atonement itself*, as it affected the world, and as it affected the elect. —We have already seen, how anti-scriptural it is to deny the existence and operation, on God's part, in the provision of the atonement, of any love to the race at large; how directly such denial is in the face of the express and emphatic affirmation of the Saviour himself,—"God *so loved the world*, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life."—While such denial, then, is an extreme on the one side, I cannot but think that they go to an extreme on the other, who refuse to admit that, either in the providing of the atonement on the part of the Godhead, or in the actual making of the atonement on the part of the divine Redeemer, there was the exercise of any *special love* towards the "chosen to salvation." There was all the special love, surely, implied in the special purpose of its

effectual application. No man of ordinary candour will deny, that, supposing the existence of such a purpose, it was the purpose of love, or of sovereign favour; and that if, in the providing and the making of the atonement, the purpose was present to the mind of God and to the mind of Christ, the love or favour implied in the purpose must also, at the same time, have been in exercise:—so that there was, in the atonement, a twofold design, and a corresponding twofold aspect,—a general design to provide by it for the glory of God in human salvation, and a special design that it should be the efficient means of salvation to a certain number;—and a corresponding aspect of general favour to the fallen race of man, as, in this respect, distinguished from apostate angels, for whom no such provision of mercy through a Mediator was made,—and of special favour—secret and sovereign—towards those to whom it was the design of God, by divine influence, to render it effectual. I may adopt, on this point, the very terms of a recent writer:*—"In this, as I understand the matter, consisted the *whole* difference between his dying for them" (the elect) "and his dying for others,—this *secret* intention, this *personal* regard, known only to himself and to his father in heaven. Keep this out of view, and he died equally for all, equally in the room of all. His death made equal atonement or

* Dr. Marshall, p. 71.

satisfaction for all; that is, vindicated the divine government in showing mercy to one, just as much as in showing mercy to another; or, in other words, laid an ample ground for pardoning the whole race, had it pleased the Most High to bestow pardon on so extensive a scale."—It may fairly be asked, what more there is, what more there can be, in the "*secret intention*" here specified, consistently with the remaining terms of the statement, at all different from that which we affirm,—a limitation, the result of sovereign and special love, in the purposed *application* of the atonement? It is clear as day, that this "secret intention," this "personal regard," made no difference whatsoever *in the atonement itself*, either as it respects the saved, or as it respects the lost. If the divine government was not *more* vindicated in showing mercy to one than it would have been in showing mercy to another; —if "keeping out of view" the "secret intention" as to the actual salvation of some, he "died *equally* for all, *equally* in the room of all,"—then the atonement itself is the same,—essentially, and in its proper nature as atonement, the same,—as to all, the saved and the lost alike:—and in that case, it is not easy to see, to what else than to the *effectual application* of the atonement this "secret intention" and "personal regard" can refer.—It is very obvious, indeed, that by any secret purpose of God's electing love (for I agree with the well-put sentiment of this writer, that "election is just the

love of God formed into a purpose") the *essence* of the atonement is not in the least degree affected. That essence is well expressed by himself in the sentences I have just cited, and in many more; and the great vindication of the righteousness of the divine character and government in the forgiveness of sins stands out, in all its sublime perfection, as gloriously achieved by the work finished on the cross, altogether independently of any secret purpose with regard to the extent to which that forgiveness should, on the ground of it, be granted. The atonement itself, and the sovereignly designed effects of it, are two entirely distinct though connected things;—as distinct as the provision of a medicine, or means of cure, and the extent of its actual administration and sanatory efficiency.—The atonement, and the purpose to save by means of the atonement, can never be identified. The atonement would have remained the same, had the offers made on account of it been refused by every individual of the human race; and God would have been glorified in having graciously provided it, and graciously offered his rebellious creatures pardon on the ground of it, and glorified in the universal condemnation of men for their ungrateful requital of his love. There it stands,—illustriously accomplished, and graciously revealed. In itself considered, while it renders possible the salvation of all, it secures, or renders certain, the salvation of none. The security of the salvation of the chosen number

lies, not in the atonement itself, but in the purpose of God, providing in their case for its acceptance and efficacy.

This provision consists in the sovereign efficacious influence of the Holy Spirit.—I am far from holding any such ability on the part of man, as either precludes or diminishes the necessity of his influence to the sinner's conversion. The work of the Spirit is as essential to salvation as the work of Christ. While in the latter the sinner finds his ground of acceptance, he owes to the former his personal interest in that ground. The mode of the Spirit's operation, in effecting that change of heart in which conversion consists, we are admonished by Christ himself not to expect or attempt to comprehend:—"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth;—so is every one that is born of the Spirit." (John iii. 8.) But the reality and necessity of his operation, not that passage alone, but the whole Bible, testifies;—and every such view of human ability as tends, in any measure, to set it aside, must be destitute of the sanction of divine authority. The influence that effects conversion is not merely the influence of the word,—or of the truth. It is true that the Spirit is in the word, considered as "given by inspiration of God." It is "the mind of the Spirit." But still, in conversion, or regeneration, there is to be acknowledged, not only the influence of the word,

but the influence of the Spirit by means of the word. He uses his own instrument, for effecting his own ends. The word is "the sword of the Spirit." But it is not enough that he prepare it:—he must wield it. In conversion, there is neither the word without the Spirit, nor the Spirit without the word; but the word and the Spirit conjointly,—the instrument and the agent. The sinner himself may not be directly conscious of any influence save that of the truth. But this very influence of the truth arises from his discerning its divine excellence, its adaptation to his own felt exigencies, and its worthiness of the "God with whom he has to do." And it is by the secret illumination of the Spirit that this discernment is imparted, and that the native enmity of his heart is subdued and slain. Enmity is the essential element of the old nature,—love that of the new:—and regeneration is a change from enmity to love, effected by the Spirit's agency and the truth's instrumentality.

To allege that when God, in his providence, brings a sinner under the sound of the gospel,—and, at the same time, it may be, places him in circumstances which are, in their nature, calculated to affect his mind favourably towards it,—he has done all that, in his word, is meant by divine influence, or the gracious operation of his Spirit; and to allege, further, that when of two sinners favoured with the same means of knowledge and of impression, one becomes a convert and the other remains

in his unbelief and sin,—there is no other influence than that which is common to both, to account for the difference of result in the one case and in the other,—appears to me very wide of the truth. In the first place, these providential arrangements are not at all what is universally understood by divine influence. They are only a part of the means with which and by which that influence operates. Then, if there is no other influence in the case of the regenerated convert than in that of the man who remains dead in trespasses and sins,—to what does the former owe the difference between himself and the latter? The cause must lie *in himself;* in some better disposition, on his part, to be rightly affected by the same means. To say that the one resists the Spirit, while the other does not, is saying nothing to the purpose;—the question still recurring—How comes it,—to what is it owing,—that the one yields, while the other resists?—which leaves the matter in the very same position. —To say that the Scriptures do not answer such questions, but leave us in ignorance of the cause of such difference,—not at all explaining how it happens that the one resists, and how it happens that the other yields,—does not seem to me consistent with fact. The Scriptures teach us the reason in both cases. The resistance of the one arises from the sinful enmity of his heart, and partakes of the sinfulness of its cause:—the yielding of the other is owing—not to the absence or the comparative

weakness of this enmity in his case, but to the gracious illumination and subduing power of the Holy Spirit, effecting the purposes of God's sovereign mercy.—Lydia (Acts xvi.) heard Paul and Silas preach the gospel. It was not, then, *before* hearing, but *in* hearing, that "the Lord opened her heart, that she attended to the things which were spoken." Here is both the instrument and the agency.—*While* Paul spoke, the Lord,—by his Spirit,—in a way of his own, which to us he has not explained,—imparted a spiritual perception of the excellence and glory and suitableness of the doctrine taught; and this, as it was gradually imparted in the course of the presentation of the truth to her mind, gradually interested her, and wrought upon her affections. Her attention was thus arrested, and became more and more steadily fixed,—her interest became deeper and deeper, increasingly lively and intense, in proportion as her views of the truth opened and cleared. This is simple and natural:—and it is the exemplar of many a case of conversion to God. A sinner is hearing the exposition of the gospel scheme. Some particular thought startles and arrests him. He perceives something that meets his consciousness. His attention is fixed. He discerns, with increasing clearness, the nature of the scheme; especially its perfect adaptation to the exigencies of his condition and to the glory of God. He is rivetted. He drinks in the wonderful discoveries.

His heart is melted and won. He "receives the truth in the love of it," and is saved.—This is the Lord's doing. It is the Spirit's work. Without at all touching on the disputed question, respecting the strivings of the Spirit with those who remain in their hardness of heart and rebellion,—this much the whole word of God warrants our affirming,—that in every instance in which a saving change appears,—it is not by the word alone, nor by providence alone, but by the Holy Spirit making use of both, that the change has been effected.—"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him:—neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." This spiritual discernment, by which what before appeared foolishness comes to be "known" in its excellence and truth, as "the power of God, and the wisdom of God," the Holy Spirit imparts:—and then the sinner is "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever:"—this word being, in a special manner, "THE GOSPEL."*

I desire to be as zealous for the work of the Spirit as for the work of Christ. The one, I repeat, is as necessary to salvation as the other. If we cannot be justified without the work of Christ,—neither can we be sanctified without the work of

* 1 Cor. ii. 14. 1 Pet. i. 23—25.

the Spirit. Nothing short of the Spirit's power can effectually overcome that enmity, that aversion of heart, that rebellion of will, in which we consider human inability to consist.—And in all cases in which this converting power operates, there is the following up of a divine intention or purpose. It is "according to the good pleasure of his will, —to the praise of the glory of his grace."

I may now be told, that if I grant an existing sovereign purpose of limited application and efficiency, I grant what involves the very same difficulty, in regard to the universality of the gospel invitations, with that which I have alleged to lie between such universality and a limited atonement. —This is a point of special importance; and yet it is one on which it is not necessary to argue at any great length. I grant the existence of a difficulty. It were most uncandid to deny it. It is the difficulty by which we are met at every turn, in all the attempts of our contracted and feeble minds to comprehend the mysteries of the divine administration,—and especially to attain to any clear conceptions respecting the principles of harmony between the fixed purposes, the absolute decrees, of divine omniscience, and the perfect freedom and accountableness of men. But the difficulty, how great soever we admit it to be, we cannot grant to be one *of the same kind*. The hypothesis of a limited atonement,—in whichsoever of the two senses formerly explained we understand the

phrase, involves (as already largely shown) a *natural impossibility* in the way of the pardon of any beyond the number for whom the atonement has been made, and consequently introduces self-contradictoriness into all such universal invitations, rendering them, in regard to a vast proportion of mankind, invitations to accept what exists not to be accepted,—what cannot become theirs without a new atonement.—In the other case, there is nothing of this kind. There is atonement for all. On the ground of that atonement, there is pardon for all. There is, therefore, a clear and perfect consistency in the invitation of all to the acceptance of the pardon. There is, moreover, equitable responsibility lying on all for the reception they give to that invitation. The rejection of it, springing invariably from moral causes alone, involves, in every case, a greater or less amount of guilt. The sole cause of exclusion from the forgiveness of his sins and everlasting salvation is in the sinner's self; —it is, in every instance, self-exclusion.

On the question,—how the secret purposes of God are to be reconciled with the sincerity of his universal invitations, and with human accountableness and exposure to penal consequences for the refusal of them; although, as I have long since avowed, and as will immediately appear, I presume not to think or to say that every difficulty on such a subject,—one of the "deep things of God,"—can be cleared away,—yet the following observa-

tions may serve, in some degree, to explain and to mitigate it, and to show sinners (which is of no small moment) their true position in regard to it. The observations are meant to bear especially upon *human accountableness* :—

1. In the *first* place :—In the atonement, as satisfying public justice, and glorifying God, there exists, as we have seen, an all-sufficient ground for the dispensation of pardon,—and in the universality of the atonement, an equally sufficient ground for the universality (should it so please the sovereign Ruler) of such dispensation. There is no limitation, no restriction, here. Mercy is free; unarrested in its exercise by any interposing claims of justice. Every barrier, of this or of any other kind, has been broken down and swept away, and a channel-course opened, as spacious as the infinitude of the divine benevolence and the vastness of human guilt and misery can require, in which its exuberant tide may flow, over all the earth, and to the end of time. There is salvation, then, for all, offered, on the part of God, freely and fully, to every sinner on earth that hears the "joyful sound." There is nothing, on God's part, that keeps any sinner back. All are invited,—and all, without difference and without exception, assured, that, if they come, they shall "in no wise be cast out."

2. In the *second* place :—There exists in men universally a ground of responsibility,—all that is requisite, as before explained, to render them justly

accountable. This accountableness for the treatment they give to the offers of the gospel arises from the nature of those offers themselves, as well as of human capabilities, irrespectively of all secret purposes in the mind of God, and of all communications of grace to the mind of man. All to whom the gospel message comes, and who have "ears to hear," have the means of salvation and salvation itself in their power. It depends on their own will, whether salvation is or is not to be theirs. The universal proclamation, in the name and by the authority of the God of heaven, and involving the pledge of his veracity that none shall be sent empty away, is—"Whosoever will, let him take,—take freely." The gospel may be preached, and preached in all its fulness,—nay, we must say, ought to be so preached,—without a word being said about election. Any statement of that doctrine is not at all necessary to the full exhibition of the gospel, as a proclamation of the divine satisfaction in the finished work of Jesus, and of the ground and the offer of pardon and salvation to sinners of mankind without exception. In point of fact, the recorded specimens of apostolic preaching contain nothing of the doctrine of election. The method of the apostles was (and we are quite sure it was the right one) to proclaim the message of mercy through the atonement,—and then, when by any that message was received, and they became the subjects of the peace and the hope and the holiness which the reception

of it imparts, to teach them, as believers,—what every one of them would then be ready, humbly and gratefully, to own,—to whom they owed the difference between their former and their present selves, and between themselves and the multitude of the unbelieving and perishing around them;—that "by the grace of God they were what they were."—But this has nothing to do with the proclamation of the gospel to sinners. To them its offers were freely presented,—"without money and without price," —and without so much as any notice of such a distinction as that between elect and non-elect, or of any purpose of God beyond the general one of "saving that which was lost."—To every sinner, as belonging to the number of the lost, this purpose of God in the mission and work of his Son was declared,—and the salvation, on that ground, urged upon his acceptance. If he would not receive it, the guilt of the refusal lay entirely with himself, and the death that ensued was self-inflicted.

3. Such being the state of the case, in regard to the general design of the atonement as the ground for the offer of mercy to mankind,—the existence of any secret divine purpose, in reference to individuals, does not, in the remotest degree, affect or alter it. The very fact of its being *secret* should be enough to satisfy sinners of two things:—in the first place, that it is a matter with which, in their transactions with God, they have nothing to do. Such secret purposes may be the rule of his con-

duct; but they never can, in any way whatever, be the rule of theirs; and to think of waiting till they can discover them, before they will resolve how to act, is of all infatuations the most infatuated. "Secret things belong unto the Lord our God." And, being secret and unknown, they can no more exert any influence on the moral determinations of men, than that which has no existence. When the mere fact of their existence is made known, though themselves are still kept secret,—men may make a presumptuous and self-deluding use of the fact, perverting it, and charging it with an influence which, in the nature of things, it cannot have, in apology or extenuation of the *real* cause of their rejection of God's offered mercy,—a cause which is not in God, or in any purpose of God, but in themselves,—only and entirely in themselves:—but that this is a wilful perversion, or a miserable delusion,—and that the purposes of the divine mind exert no influence on human conduct, and can furnish no mitigation of human guilt,—may be made the more apparent, by observing—

4. In the *fourth* place,—that in the entire administration of providence there are purposes with regard to future events;—which events are to be brought about by the intervention of human agency;—while yet this agency is of a culpable character, and the agents are admonished and urged to a course of conduct in harmony with right principle, and therefore the very reverse of

that by which those divine purposes are destined to be accomplished. This is one of the mysteries of the supreme government of the universe, which we must believe, though we cannot fully understand. The introduction of any such plea as that urged in the case before us, would necessarily lead to a system of absolute fatalism, annihilating all moral responsibility, and all guilt. Multitudes of Bible exemplifications of this might be quoted. I refer to two or three, for the sake of showing clearly what I mean.—The brethren of Joseph spoke truly of themselves, when they whispered one to another, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us." Conscience was in the right. They *were* verily guilty. And yet it was the purpose of God, by means of their unbrotherly envy and cruelty, to fulfil his prophetic intimations to Abraham respecting the future history of the nation that was to spring from his loins. It was not the less their duty to be affectionate and kind to their brother, that such affection and kindness would have disarranged and frustrated the whole counsel of God; nor was it the less their sin to violate the claims of fraternal love, that by such violation they fulfilled it. The existence of the divine purpose abated not in the least the *guilt* of their conduct; and for this reason, that it did not in the least affect its *principle*.—It was the

purpose, and the repeated assurance of God, that Jerusalem should be sacked by the Chaldeans, and the people carried captive to Babylon, and the period of their captivity was expressly specified; —yet the same people were exhorted and urged by the Spirit of Jehovah in his prophets, to desist from their own counsels, and to comply with his, and were assured, on the credit of his unfailing word, that by such compliance they would save their city from pillage, and themselves from bondage, and be the objects of his restored favour, instead of his impending vengeance. Thus it appeared that their duty was a matter altogether independent of God's purposes. The two, indeed, were perfect antipodes to each other. The duty was in the very teeth of the purpose. Yet still it was duty. The purpose affected not the conduct, although the conduct fulfilled the purpose. —It was according to "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God,"—according to his purpose from eternity made known in time,—that "Christ should suffer;" yet it was not the less "by wicked hands" that he was "crucified and slain."—"He came unto his own, and his own received him not." In not receiving him, they incurred the deepest guilt. And yet, "had they known him, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." But it was not the less their duty to receive him, nor the less their sin to reject him and put him to death, that, had they

received him, the purpose of God must have failed, and that by their putting him to death that purpose—the purpose of the world's salvation—was effected! O mystery inscrutable!—the darkest display of the enmity of man against God, employed in bringing out the brightest manifestation of the love of God to man!—the greatest evil working out the greatest good, and the evil remaining undiminished in its enormity!—blood, shed on man's part under the impulse of hell and with the guilt of the foulest murder, and yet shed on God's part in the exercise of everlasting mercy, and for the redemption of a lost world!—as in the former case, the conduct working out the purpose, but the purpose making no change in the moral qualities and the consequent guilt of the conduct.—And, subsequently to Christ having "suffered and entered into his glory," it was still, and even more than ever, seeing the evidences of his divine mission were then completed, the duty of the Jewish people to repent and to acknowledge him whom they had crucified as "made both Lord and Christ;" and it is without question, that, had they done so, they and their city would have continued unto this day in all the fulness of the divine blessing. But the destruction of the city, and the dispersion of the people, were in the intimated purpose of God. According to that purpose, "the casting away of them was to be the reconciling of the world,"—and the Gentiles "who

had not believed God were to obtain mercy through their unbelief." Yet all this diminished not the guilt of that unbelief and of those crimes, for which "the wrath came upon them to the uttermost."—It is in surveying this mystery of the divine administration, that the apostle exclaims, —and we may well, with lowly adoration, adopt his words:—"O the depth of the riches, and wisdom, and knowledge of God!—how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

"There were those in that day," says the judicious and venerable Fuller,* "as there are in this, who objected—If things be as God hath purposed, 'why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will?' This was no other than suggesting, that the doctrine of decrees must needs operate to the setting aside of the *fault* of sinners:—and this is the substance of what has been alleged from that day to this. Some, because they cannot conceive of the doctrine but as drawing after it the consequence assigned to it by this *replier against God*, reject it;—others appear to have no objection to the consequence itself, stamped as it is with infamy by the manner in which the apostle repelled it, and therefore admit the doctrine as connected with it. But so did not Paul. He held fast the doctrine of decrees, and held it as comporting with

* Gospel worthy of all acceptation:—Works, Vol. ii. p. 64.

the *fault* of sinners. After all that he had written upon God's electing some, and rejecting others, he, in the same chapter, assigns the failure of those that failed to their 'not seeking justification by faith in Christ, but as it were by the works of the law, stumbling at that stumbling-stone.'"

5. I would say, then, in the *last* place, to any of my hearers who may be disposed (and multitudes are, more lightly or more gravely) to "stumble at this stumbling-stone" of the divine purposes, —Since you see, from the dictates of divine revelation, and must be sensible from the reason of the thing and from every-day facts, that the purposes of God are wrought out by means of human agency, and yet that the moral character of that agency is unaffected, even in the remotest degree, by the existence of the purposes, or by the relation in which it stands to their accomplishment, — beware, — O beware. Beware of meddling with "things too high for you," — and not for you alone, but probably for any created intellect. Be modest and reasonable. You begin at the wrong end. The proper course for us, short-sighted creatures, is,—instead of beginning with the purpose, and reasoning forward to the event, to begin with the event, and reason backward to the purpose. Let the infinite Mind, with its secret and sovereign purposes, and its mysterious modes of working them out, alone. Rest assured, that in "the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of

God" he will "bring forth his own righteousness as the light, and his judgment as the noon-day." If nothing will satisfy you, but going back first into eternity, and reading the divine mind in its own light, which is that mind's own peculiar prerogative; we can give you no encouragement in the presumptuous wish, no direction and no aid in the fruitless endeavour. You may if you will,

> . . . . . "take the high *priori* road,
> And reason downwards, till you doubt of God:"

—but you are going widely and wildly astray. Your proper business is, instead of prying into the secrets of God, to attend to his discoveries; instead of stumbling at his unknown purposes, to listen to his known and gracious invitations. Risk not, ruin not, your souls, on a point of dark metaphysical abstraction,—one of those hidden things of God, over which angels spread their wings in prostrate devotion.—I bring you to one test of your sincerity, in deriving from the secret purposes of God an excuse for your treating these invitations with indifference or rejection,—and saying, whether lightly or indignantly,—"If I am of the chosen, good and well; and if I *am* to be damned, I cannot help it." The test is a fair and simple one. If you have any belief in a superintending providence, you must be convinced that there are secret purposes of God in regard to temporal things, as well as in regard to spiritual. I ask you, then, at

once, do you act upon the same principle in regard to the one as in regard to the other? If you are in earnest, and if you would be consistent, you must. I will tell you, then, what will satisfy me of your sincerity in professing to be influenced by any consideration of the divine decrees. You shall have full credit for such sincerity, whenever I see you applying your principle alike on both sides:—when, in time of sickness, I see you refusing to have recourse to any means of cure, till you can ascertain the secret purpose of God whether you are to recover or to die:—when, in agriculture, I hear you say—Not a ploughshare shall break up a ridge of my fields;—not a handful of seed will I throw away,—nor shall a harrow be allowed to pass over it, till I know what is the intention of providence as to the harvest,—whether it be the purpose of God to send a favourable season, and allow me a fair return for my toil and expense, or to visit me with a famine and a failure of my hopes:—when, in case of fire in your dwelling, you use no means of escape,—make no effort either to quench the flames or to flee from them, but sit still, or lie still, where you chance to be, till you know whether it be the decree of heaven that the fire should reach you, or, reaching, injure you:—when, in one word, I see you give up food itself, refuse all means of sustenance, till you can discover how long the God of your life has purposed that you should live.—You are a passenger, let me sup-

pose, on board a ship at sea. The storm rises, and rages. The vessel strikes on a rocky coast. The waves break over her, and she is in danger every moment of going to pieces. Your own life, and the lives of all on board are in jeopardy. In the instinct of dread, you shriek out for help. The humane spectators on the beach respond to the cry, and hasten to the rescue. They launch and man the life-boat. And, just as they are pushing off to dash through the foaming breakers, I coolly come up to them, and say—What folly is all this? —why this useless ado?—how vain this exposure of yourselves to peril! If these men are destined to survive, he who has so ordered it will save them without any aid from you; and if otherwise he has purposed, and has doomed them to a watery grave, what puny power of yours can rescue them from the doom?—Would you, in these circumstances, like the doctrine?—would you relish this kind of application of your own principle? Yet the cases are parallel. If you would not relish it then, be assured you are deceiving yourselves, or you are hypocritically deceiving others, in applying it as you do now. You have no right to expect that we should believe you in earnest, when you apply it in the one case, and never think of applying it in the other. Whence this inconsistency? I am at no loss to tell you. It arises from one cause alone. If you were as much in earnest about your eternal as you are about your temporal interests,—about

the life of your souls as about the life of your bodies;—if you felt your danger in the one case, as you feel it in the other, and were as anxious for safety; divine purposes would not give you another moment's thought;—you would listen at once to divine entreaties, and flee to the refuge.

I have said that the cases are parallel. There is one point, however, in which the parallelism fails; and that point is all against you;—yet, I rejoice to say, happily against you;—against you in your fallacious reasoning,—happily against you, from the encouragement which the point of failure is fitted to impart.—I explain myself from one out of the several illustrative cases, which have just been adduced. In regard to your present or temporal life, you have no assurance given you that by eating of the "meat that perisheth" it will actually be prolonged,—that a single day or hour will be added to it. For aught you can ever tell, you may not survive long enough to complete the digestion of the food, and to allow your bodily frame to receive its invigorating benefit. Now, here is the point of failure. Notwithstanding this ignorance, you eat. You eat from the mere knowledge of the necessity and the tendency, although entirely unassured of the actual effect. But in the case to which you are applying your principle, it is otherwise; and it is the only case in which it is so. With regard to the "bread of life,"—the "true bread,"

—the "bread from heaven, that giveth life unto the world," you have the positive, the divine assurance, that "whosoever eateth of this bread shall live for ever." How strange, then, the infatuation! You eat with avidity "the meat that perisheth," when you have no more than a peradventure that the frail life which it is meant to sustain shall continue for an hour; and yet you refuse the "living bread," although you have the assurance of Him who cannot lie, that none who eat of it can ever be "hurt of the second death," and that, if *you* eat of it, the eternal life of your soul is secure. You eat for the sake of the one life, on the ground of a probability; you refuse to eat for the sake of the other, on the ground of a certainty!—In the peril of shipwreck (to allude to another of my illustrations) even the life-boat may fail you;—but to the perishing sinner, who feels his danger, and who calls to him for succour, Christ is a refuge that never fails. None ever applied to him in vain; and none, whose souls' salvation he undertakes, can ever perish!—If you *do* perish, then, the blame rests with yourselves. You perish by an act of self-destruction. It is by no influence of any secret decree of heaven that you are lost;—it is the result of your own free and unconstrained choice. God offers you life, and you choose death:—he offers you holiness, and you choose sin:—he offers you his bless-

ing, and you choose his curse :—he offers you himself, and you choose the world: he offers you heaven, and you choose hell!

I now come to the brief fulfilment of what I have more than once intimated my design to attempt: —namely, to adjust the balance between contending parties, and to show the amount of the difference.—It was with reference to this part of my subject, that the words of the text suggested themselves to my mind; not for the purpose of applying them, but rather of deprecating their rash and unwarrantable application. I have so frequently found parties in a controversy nearer to each other than they have themselves been aware, or than, in the warmth of argument, they have been disposed to allow,—that experience has taught me some measure of caution,—and the necessity of analysing terms,—of making the requisite abatements from the extra amount of meaning which has been infused into them by an undue though conscientious zeal; and of weighing sentiments more than words.—There is great danger in the hasty use of such strong condemnatory expressions as those of our text. The apostle uses them deliberately. Lest any should imagine he was using them in intemperate haste, he solemnly repeats them. They are not indeed to be regarded as the mere dictate of his own mind. Though associated with personal feeling,—with the emotions of personal zeal for the

glory of Christ and the salvation of men, they are the utterance of inspiration.—I would lay it down as a safe rule, that no man should charge a minister of Christ with preaching "another gospel," unless, on mature examination, he is so convinced that what is preached is a subversion of the grace which renders the gospel what it is—good tidings to perishing sinners,—and that thus it takes the glory of salvation from the true and only Saviour,—that he is prepared, with deliberate solemnity, to add, as Paul does here,—"let him be accursed!"—And this is no light matter. With a great deal more than enough of hasty rancour or of easy lightness, have I heard the charge brought. To no doctrine, assuredly, ought it to be applied, but doctrine that is *inconsistent with salvation*. No man should himself be pronounced accursed, but he whose doctrine is fitted to keep his fellow-sinners under the curse.—There is another danger too, which requires to be carefully guarded against:—the danger, I mean, of imputing such consequences as we think we can show to arise legitimately and unavoidably from a particular doctrine, or view of a doctrine, to all by whom that doctrine, or that view of it, is held. The consequences may, on our part, be fairly deduced: and it may be both right and important to show that they are. But the supporters of the doctrine might not see them before, and may not see them yet, to be legitimate deductions; and, if they did, would repudiate them

as decidedly as we do ourselves, and abandon, on their account, that which leads to them. We may marvel that they do not. But still, while we wonder at what appears to us their obtuseness of vision, we must beware of ascribing to them what they do not hold,—of laying to their charge what they distinctly and solemnly disown.

The parties in the present controversy may, I presume, be considered as agreed, on the following essential points:—the universal depravity, guilt, and condemnation of mankind:—the impossibility of any one, in these circumstances, making out his justification, or finding acceptance with God, on the ground of works of law,—or on that of repentance, or any thing whatever in himself:—the consequent helplessness and hopelessness of man's condition, independently of divine provision for his recovery:—the true divinity, as well as true humanity, of the Lord Jesus Christ:—the vicarious nature of his obedience unto death, and the propitiatory and substitutionary character and design of that death:—the infinite value, and consequent unlimited sufficiency of his atonement:—the exclusiveness of this atonement, as the sole ground on which God pardons and saves the guilty:—the perfect gratuitousness of this pardon and this salvation to every sinner who receives them:—the necessity of faith in Christ to an interest in these blessings:—the propriety and the duty of proclaiming the offer of pardon and salvation, on the ground of the

atonement, to all, and to each,—assuring all indiscriminately, and assuring each individually, of God's forgiveness and of eternal life, for the sake of Christ, on their believing in his name, and renouncing all other dependencies:—the necessity of the agency of the Holy Spirit, along with the influence of the truth, in enlightening and converting the soul:—and the sovereign and eternal purpose of God to render the work of Christ, by this graciously imparted agency, effectual to the salvation of a chosen number, not for any difference between them and others, but "according to the good pleasure of his will."

Amidst such an extent of agreement, what is the point, or what are the points, of difference?—Would the inspired apostle, think you, have denounced as "another gospel" the declaration of the series of truths now stated, and have recorded his "anathema" against the preacher of it? "I trow not."—Where, then, I repeat, lies the difference? I am by no means disposed to think or to speak lightly of it:—yet I do feel anxious, while admitting its importance, and contending earnestly for that view of it which I conceive to be necessary for vindicating the divine sincerity, and that of the servants of Christ when ministering in his name,—to bring it into as narrow a compass as possible, rather than (as I think some have shown a disposition to do)—unnecessarily to aggravate and extend it.—It may all, I am persuaded, be resolved into

one point;—for if that were conceded, it seems to me that no other could well remain.—The point to which I refer lies in the answer to the question, WHETHER UNIVERSALITY IN THE ATONEMENT BE NECESSARY TO CONSISTENCY IN UNIVERSALITY OF INVITATION?—The propriety and the duty of universal invitation being on both sides assumed, and the practice, on both sides, actually followed, is there, on both sides, in this practice, the same consistency? The question, observe, is one, not of duty,—for the duty is mutually granted,—but of *consistency between duty and principle*. I cannot refrain from avowing my surprise that on this point there should be a moment's hesitation. It is not necessary to go back upon former discussions relative to the true nature and design of atonement, and of the christian atonement, in order to return a satisfactory answer to this question of consistency. Like not a few questions, it may be answered by another—According to the constitution of the gospel and of the divine government as regulated by it, can sin be pardoned that has not been included in the atonement?—or, in other words, Can a sinner be forgiven, and accepted of God, for whose sins no atonement has been made?—If this question is answered in the negative, as by both parties it must be; then, if all cannot be *pardoned* unless atonement has been made for all, can all be consistently *invited to pardon* unless atonement has been made for all?

Can sinners be consistently invited to accept what God cannot consistently bestow?

Could I succeed in carrying conviction to my brethren's minds on this one simple point, there would be no difficulty in anything else. If the atonement was such a commercial or *quid-pro-quo* transaction, as that all in whose behalf it was offered, *must* be pardoned, then of course the elect alone have anything to do with it, and they alone, hypothetically, should be invited to the acceptance and enjoyment of their purchased pardon. But if the atonement was such a satisfaction to public justice, as "to lay an ample ground for pardoning the whole race, in case it had pleased the most High to bestow pardon on so extensive a scale," then is it a ground, not on which the sins of a certain number *must* be pardoned, but on which the sins of all *may* be pardoned:—and on this ground there is clear and blessed consistency in the universality of invitation.—And then, this universality of invitation will necessarily draw after it the admission of such a ground of accountableness in man as to justify God in the condemnation of all by whom the invitation is refused, and to leave the blameworthiness entirely with themselves:—while, at the same time, the admission, on the other side, of a sovereign purpose, limiting the application, or the actually saving efficiency, of the atonement, leaves the cardinal doctrine of *election* in all its integrity.—Still, it is a question of consistency in principle, rather than of

substantial difference in practice;—and indeed, in some instances, when statements come to be fully and calmly compared, the difference turns out to be one more in words than in reality; and is certainly, in no view of it, a sufficient warrant for schisms, and separations, and depositions from the ministry.

I give one illustration. I might give many. It must be obvious that if Christ died for *all*, then he died for *each;* that is, the sins of each individual sinner were so included in the indefinite atonement, as that that atonement may, with perfect propriety, be said to have been *for him.*— A writer, however, to whom I have repeatedly referred, expresses himself thus:—"Not a few seem to imagine, that the gospel which reveals Christ to all as a Saviour, proclaims that he has died for all, and that every man who hears the gospel is required to believe that he died for him. In other words, they conceive that the faith which justifies and saves a man is nothing but the belief that Christ died for the race without exception, and consequently for him as a matter of course. I deny, however, that this is the faith of the gospel. The faith of the gospel must be the faith of something which the gospel reveals; but I should like to know where the gospel reveals to any man in particular that Christ died for him. Most certainly the gospel nowhere reveals any such thing. Whoever believes such a thing believes what is false; and whoever calls upon others to believe it calls upon

them to believe a lie."*—These are hard words, meriting a similar reprehension with the charge, already alluded to, of preaching another gospel. Were we, indeed, to understand Christ's dying for any sinner in particular as implying that the sins of that sinner *must* be pardoned,—so that to believe that Christ died *for him* would amount to a belief of his being justified,—then what is here affirmed would be well founded. The sinner would be called to believe what, at the time of his being so called, was not true. And no imaginable proposition can be more self-evidently absurd, than that a man may be called upon to believe what is not at the time true, but becomes true in the act of his believing it; his faith generating a new truth, or converting into truth what before was falsehood! This is worse than mysticism. It is self-contradiction, such as, with good reason, the infidel will "laugh to scorn." But the words are as hasty as they are hard. Hear the same writer:—"The atonement, while limited in its design, was general in its nature, having a certain reference, and a certain applicability to every human being. Although the Saviour, in his death, had not the same love to all, nor the same purpose to save all, it may yet be affirmed with truth that he made the same satisfaction for all. It was public justice only that demanded his death; and what satisfied public justice in one case, necessarily

* Dr. Marshall, page 100.

satisfied it in every case. If satisfied for one, it must have been satisfied for all; if not satisfied for all, it could not be properly satisfied for any."*—Now, if "the same satisfaction was made for all,"—if this is the "reference and applicability which the atonement has to every human being,"—does it not follow, that every sinner, when called to the belief of the gospel, is called to believe that the satisfaction was made for him?—and, since it was in Christ's death that the satisfaction was made, what difference is there between believing this and believing "that Christ died for him?" And indeed, of what interest, or of what avail, could the gospel, or could the death of Christ be to him, if this were not true? It is no lie; but a truth, and a blessed truth, on this respected writer's own showing.—There is, in his statements on this subject, a confounding of things that differ,—the brief exposition of which may serve a conciliatory purpose between brethren, who are unhappily disagreeing and dividing, when there is more need than ever for their union; but, at the same time, whose differences and discussions, if conducted in a right spirit, will contribute to the filtration of truth, and the separation from it of whatever portion may have found admission into it of the feculence of human system. This confounding of things that differ appears in the phrases,—"although the Sa-

* Ibid. pages 85, 86.

viour, in his death, had not the same love to all, nor the same purpose to save all, it may yet be affirmed with truth that he made the same satisfaction for all." It is more fully brought out in the following sentences :—"In speaking of the Saviour's dying for men, or dying for sinners, I have used the expressions in what I conceive to be their strict and proper meaning, namely, as signifying his dying with an *intention* to save them. This, however, I am well aware, is not the only meaning the expressions will bear ; nor is it the meaning in which they must be taken, when, instead of 'men,' or 'sinners,' we say 'all men,' or sinners in general. For all men, for sinners in general, the Saviour died, but not with the intention that they should all be saved. He died in their *nature ;* he died in their *stead ;* he died doing honour to the law which they had violated, making reparation to the justice which they had provoked, bearing the curse to which they were subjected, suffering the death to which they were doomed. In other words, he died, removing every legal obstruction, that lay in the way of their obtaining life, rendering it consistent with the holiness and justice of the Most High, with the security of his government, with the claims of his law, to justify and save them, provided they should believe." *

Now, on this passage allow me to remark—1. It

* Dr. Marshall, p. 70.

is sufficiently obvious, that when we insist on the universality of the atonement as a necessary ground for universal invitation, the atonement must be understood in the sense, whatever it be, in which it *is* universal; and this it would not be easy to express in better terms, and impossible to express in terms stronger and more explicit, than those just cited.—2. The atonement, considered *in itself*, could not possibly effect more for any, than what it is here represented as having effected for all. What is there that we can imagine to have been done, in the death of Christ and the atonement made by it, for any sinner whatever, more than "dying *in his stead*," "doing honour to the law which he had violated," "making reparation to the justice which he had provoked," "bearing the curse to which he was subjected," "suffering the death to which he was doomed?" If all this was in the atonement for "all men," for "sinners in general," what more could there be in it for the elect? And is there not a strange inconsistency, in admitting that all this was in the atonement for every sinner, and yet interdicting such sinner, by the averment of its being a lie, from believing or saying that Christ died *for him?*—3. The *purpose* or *intention to save*, which is represented as the peculiarity of the atonement in its relation to *the elect*, is not, as I think must be obvious to you, any part of the atonement itself,—does not at all enter into its nature:—it is a purpose,

or intention, relative to *the effects or results of the atonement,*—not an ingredient in the essence of the atonement:—it is a purpose respecting the persons to whom the atonement, in itself indefinite and the same to all, shall, by the grace of God, be rendered savingly efficacious. It is not, then, the atonement itself, but this sovereign purpose, connected with it though not essentially belonging to it, that secures their salvation. There can be nothing in the *nature* or *essence* of the atonement for one more than for another; so that if, on the one hand, the atonement was for all, and a "purpose to save" belonged to its nature, all must have been saved:—and if, on the other hand, a purpose effectually to save did not properly belong to its nature, but was connected with it, determining and limiting its effects; then what have we here but the very thing we contend for,—a universal atonement, as the ground of universal invitation,—and a special purpose, the result of a special but unmerited and sovereign favour, with regard to its actual application, or saving efficiency?

Such considerations induce me to think, that if all concern about maintaining and vindicating the correctness of systematic statements and standard phraseology be laid aside, and the parties meet for mutual explanation, with becoming candour, on purely scriptural grounds, there should not be great difficulty, where, in point of fact, there is already so near an approximation, in bringing about

a complete agreement,—or, at any rate, such a measure of unanimity as, on the principles of a sober-minded forbearance, should prevent separation, and enable them "to receive one another, even as Christ hath received both, to the glory of God."

Having already, in the former part of this discourse, addressed myself to the consciences of my hearers, and your time and patience being more than exhausted, I waive for the present any further practical application.

In next lecture, I shall endeavour to lay down and exemplify certain general principles, on which the many texts, on either side of this controversy may most naturally and consistently be explained and harmonized.

DISCOURSE VI.

APPARENT DISCREPANCY, BUT REAL HARMONY, OF SCRIPTURE STATEMENTS.

1 John ii. 2.—"And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

No person can have read the Bible with even a superficial attention, without having perceived, that, on the subject of our present discussion, there are texts which have the appearance of inconsistency; and probably few have not experienced a greater or a less degree of difficulty in determining the principle, or principles, on which these texts may be most naturally and completely harmonized. That there is no real discrepancy, all must believe, who believe in the divine inspiration of the book. If all the writers were guided, in what they wrote, by the same Spirit, the book has properly but one Author. It is the book of God. Prophets, apostles, and

evangelists, might be many; yet were they all one. Though delivering their oracles "at sundry times and in diverse manners," those oracles were not their own. These were the "things which the Spirit of Christ that was in them did signify,"—the dictates of that infinite Mind which is "without variableness or shadow of turning." In the general style of the sacred volume, indeed, there appears, as a pervading characteristic, on the present and on all subjects, a noble freedom. There are to be found, in its statements, no timid jealousies; no notes of caution; no premonitions to the reader, to beware of mistake; no hesitating apprehensiveness, as if the writers were afraid of saying too much or too little themselves, or of having too much or too little attached to their words by others; none of the anxiety to guard, to explain, and to prevent misconceptions, which is so common, and at times so abundant, in systems of human composure. In this, as in many other respects, the Bible bears, in its very style and structure, the impress of divinity. It "speaks as one having authority;" with an independent dignity becoming its original. It is above all those marks of what is human that have just been alluded to; and yet, throughout, it maintains the fullest and clearest harmony.

It does appear to me, that on the present subject, there is nothing necessary but the adoption of a right principle, to make this harmony satisfactorily apparent. It has been on this account that I have

delayed the brief review of the passages in this controversy which have been pleaded on either side, to so late a stage in our discussion :—that, by having first endeavoured to ascertain the true theory of atonement,—its proper nature and design,—we might be able the more convincingly to demonstrate the principles, by the application of which the seemingly conflicting texts may be most naturally reconciled.—In following this method, let us not be charged with first framing a theory, or hypothesis, of our own, independently of the bible, and then bending the bible into conformity to it. In framing our theory, we have not proceeded independently of the Bible. We have taken the bible along with us. We have consulted and followed it in every step. We have not dared to take one position but on its authority. The proofs of the rectitude of each have been satisfactory to our own minds. And what now remains is,—to bring them to a still further scriptural test. We are to try, whether they furnish a principle of harmony among divine statements. If they do not, they cannot be right. If they do, we shall have the crowning evidence of their correctness.

As I am desirous to bring this department of my subject within the limits of one discourse, you will at once be sensible that it is no more than a very succinct review of passages which can, in that compass, be taken. Were I to enter on this field at large, I might take fifty texts, and discourse at

length on the peculiarities of each, as well as the general doctrine of all. I must proceed more in the way of specimens than of minute detail.

We have, then, on the one side, passages which appear to represent the atonement of Jesus as, in the extent of its design, limited and definite: they are such as the following:—Matt. i. 21. "Thou shalt call his name JESUS; for he shall save his people from their sins:"—Acts xx. 28.—"To feed the Church of God, (or of the Lord) which he hath purchased with his own blood:"—John x. 11. "I am the good shepherd:—the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep;" and verse 15.—"I lay down my life for the sheep:"—Eph. v. 25—27.—"Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing:"—Isa. liii. 8. "For the transgression of my people was he stricken:"—Isa. liii. 11. "By the knowledge of himself shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities:"—Matt. xx. 28. "Even as the Son of man came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many:"—Matt. xxvi. 28. "This is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins."—In addition to these and others, there is also a pretty numerous class of passages, in which the personal pronouns *we*

and *us* and the possessive *our* occur, in such connexions as sufficiently show their reference to be, not to mankind generally, but specially and restrictively to believers. Of these we may present as a specimen,—Tit. ii. 14. "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works:"—Rom. v. 8. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners Christ died for us:"—Rom. viii. 32. "He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not, with him, also freely give us all things?"—Eph. v. 2. "Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice unto God, for a sweet-smelling savour:"—1 John v. 10. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins."

The passages on the other side in which the indefiniteness, or universality, of the atonement, and of the divine designs by means of it, is taught, are chiefly of two classes:—1. Those in which the universal terms, *all, all men, every man*, occur. These are numerous:—Rom. v. 18. "Therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men, to justification of life:"—1 Cor. xv. 22. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive:"—

2 Cor. v. 14, 15. "We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again:"—1 Tim. ii. 4. "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth:"—1 Tim. ii. 6. "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time:"—1 Tim. iv. 10. "We trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe:"—Tit. ii. 11, 12. "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men:"—Heb. ii. 9. "That he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man:"—2 Pet. iii. 9. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise,—but is long-suffering to us-ward; not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."—2. Those texts in which other terms, of the same extent of comprehensiveness, are employed—as *the world, the whole world*:—thus—John i. 29. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world:"—John iii. 16—17. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life:—for God sent not his Son into the world, to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved:"—John iv. 42. "We have heard him ourselves, and know

that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world:"—John vi. 51. "And the bread which I shall give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world:"—2 Cor. v. 19. "The word of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them:"—And our text—1 John ii. 2. "And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

In endeavouring to ascertain the principle by which the language and meaning of these seemingly conflicting passages may most naturally be harmonized, let it not be supposed that I consider all of them, on either side, as coming precisely under the same category, or the same canon of interpretation. They have their peculiarities, arising from their respective terms and connexions; nor is it either necessary or right, that we should be under the least anxiety to bring exactly the same principle, in exactly the same way, to bear upon each of them.

In some instances, the sense of the passage may turn upon the proper import of a particular word occurring in it; an alteration in the rendering of which may place the passage itself entirely out of the range of our subject. This, for example, I am satisfied, is the case, with regard to 1 Tim. iv. 10. "For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, *who is the*

Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe." —I do not consider this passage as having any reference at all to *salvation*, as the word is usually understood. The original word rendered *Saviour* means also *Preserver;* and thus I think, in this instance, it ought to have been translated. The object of trust is not Christ, but "the living God." The circumstances in which the trust is exercised, are circumstances of trial and difficulty. In the sense in which God is the *Saviour* of "those that believe," he is not the Saviour of others *at all*:—he bestows his salvation on *believers alone;* and the word "*specially*" has no legitimate application. The sentiment expressed is that of trust in the providential care of the living God, as extending to all, but maintaining a guardianship of special vigilance over his own people;—a sentiment most appropriate to the occasion, and one which was inculcated on his servants, with equal affection and authority, by their divine Master.

Again:—there are passages, in which the terms of universality require to be interpreted according to a rule of obvious simplicity, and of which the legitimacy is undisputed,—namely, that they should be understood as corresponding, in the comprehensiveness of their import, with the subject of which the writer happens to be treating. If he is speaking of a particular class of persons or things,—his *all* and his *every* should be limited or extended accordingly.—The example of this which occurs to

me, among the texts enumerated, is one, of which, indeed, I would not speak so unhesitatingly as in the former case, but only would say, that the principle of explication just mentioned seems to me the preferable one. I refer to 1 Cor. xv. 22. "For as in Adam *all die,* even so in Christ shall *all be made alive.*"—If in this passage the universal terms be taken in their unrestricted acceptation, as, in both instances, meaning *mankind;* then we know assuredly that, with regard to a vast proportion of the aggregate included, the "being made alive" does not and cannot mean what the Scripture denominates the resurrection *to life,*—which is the only resurrection that can possibly be regarded as a benefit or blessing; inasmuch as, when "the hour cometh in which all that are in their graves shall come forth," it will be—"they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of condemnation." On this supposition, therefore, (and it is, I believe, the common one) the meaning can be no more than that the *general resurrection* forms a part of the great scheme connected with the mediatorial work of the Redeemer,—arising from it, associated with it in the new constitution of things which was introduced when man fell and the race became apostate,—and necessary to the full accomplishment of the divine ends in that constitution. In any other sense, the passage would contain a flat contradiction to the general contents of the

Bible, and to the dictates of common sense; there being no imaginable ground on which rising to the endurance of the second death can be numbered among the *benefits* of Christ's mediation.—But the subject of which the apostle is treating throughout the chapter, is not the general resurrection, the resurrection of all the dead,—but "the *resurrection of the just*,"—which is, of course, the resurrection to "life everlasting:"—and therefore, applying the simple canon of interpretation under notice, I would render the words, with express reference to the class of persons of whom the apostle, in the whole context, is speaking:—"For as in Adam *they all die*, even so in Christ *they shall all be made alive*." They get their death by their connexion with the first Adam; their life by their connexion with the second.

But, while there are thus *specialities* connected with particular texts,—and while we never should either, by overlooking these specialities, try to multiply texts in behalf of any favourite sentiment, or press any text, or any word in any text, so as to extract from it, for the same purpose, one jot more than its legitimate amount of meaning, according to the mind of the Spirit,—yet still there are before us classes of passages which *seem* at variance; to which such specialities do not bear application; and which require some more general principle for their satisfactory reconciliation.—What, then, is that principle?

I come to it at once. I find it in THE TWOFOLD CAPACITY, UNDER WHICH, IN THE ATONEMENT, JEHOVAH IS TO BE CONSIDERED AS ACTING,—AND THE CORRESPONDING TWOFOLD DESIGN.—The distinction has been formerly, and largely, illustrated;—and to expatiate upon it anew, would be "vain repetition." It is with the *application* of it, as a principle of harmonious exposition of "the true sayings of God," that we have now alone to do.—I therefore merely mention in general,—that there was a double object. There was an object pertaining to the general administration of his government, as the moral Governor of the universe;—and there was an object, of a more special and limited kind, belonging to the dispensation of his favours as a sovereign Benefactor. And, in correspondence with this twofold object, there is a more general and a more special love;—a love to mankind,—to "the world,"—in providing a Saviour for them, and freely offering to them the blessings of his salvation; and a love to his people, in effectually applying to them the virtue of his atonement, and making the salvation actually theirs.

Now, make the supposition that this distinction is well-founded. We have formerly endeavoured,—and, we fondly trust, successfully,—to show that it is. But take it at present hypothetically. Suppose it true. You will at once be sensible how perfectly it meets the case. I am persuaded, that, the more maturely you reflect on it, the more

sensible will you become of its meeting it better than any other principle of reconciliation that has been proposed.—The general, indefinite, universal class of texts find their principle of interpretation in the one of these objects ;—and the special and restricted find theirs in the other. Admit the existence, in the making of the atonement, of a general purpose as to mankind,—the provision of salvation for all,—the provision of a ground on which pardoning mercy might be freely offered to all, in full consistency with the demands of law and the claims of honour and justice ;—admit this, and you have at once a satisfactory principle of explanation for the first description of passages.—Admit, again, the existence of a special sovereign purpose —a purpose of actual remission of sins and full salvation, through the atonement, to a limited number of mankind ;—and you have an equally satisfactory principle of explanation for the second.—Now, it is a rule in philosophising, that the *cause* which most thoroughly and simply furnishes an explanation of all the existing effects, should be admitted as the true one :—and the rule appears to be capable of an application equally legitimate in expounding, —that a principle of interpretation which most easily and satisfactorily explains and reconciles apparently conflicting passages bids fairest to be the true one.—I am far from saying that we are at liberty to invent a principle, and, because it thus meets and solves difficulties, to lay it down for

certain as "of divine right." What I say is,—that, having already endeavoured to show the scriptural authority for the principle,—the fact of its thus, without straining or torturing,—without supplement and without elision,—meeting and solving difficulties, may fairly be considered as completing the evidence of such authority.

The great and leading mistake, as it appears to me, on the part of those brethren who contend for a limited atonement,—whether limited in sufficiency or limited in destination,—lies in their regarding as identical things that really differ. They identify, for example, the purpose of *atonement* with the purpose of *actual pardon*:—they consider the making of the atonement as necessarily inferring the remission of all the sins for which the atonement is made,—and the acceptance and salvation of all the guilty whose sins have thus been atoned for; so that, wherever there is expiation, there *must* be forgiveness; the one must necessarily be co-extensive with the other. But this, as we formerly showed, is a view that proceeds too much on the principle of direct *commutation*,—of the literal payment of debt, or the exaction of a certain amount of suffering as the substitutionary punishment of a certain number of sinners, in such a way as that to inflict the punishment on these sinners themselves would be to commit the injustice of requiring the penalty twice for the same offences. It was by such views

as these that some old divines were tempted to supplement those texts which represent the design of the atonement in terms of unqualified universality, by the foisting in of qualifying terms, and restrictive parentheses;—and to speak of *the elect world* where the Bible speaks simply of *the world*, and of *the whole world of God's elect*, where *the whole world* is the phrase of inspiration.—It were easy to show, in various exemplifications, the contradiction and absurdity in which the introduction of such supplements involves the sacred writers, —perplexing the simplicity, darkening the clearness, and even throwing doubt around the honesty, of their statements. It were easy to demonstrate that in the Holy Scriptures, the *world* is not, in any one instance, employed,—and that, in the very nature of the thing, it could not possibly be employed,—to denote the chosen people of God. —It could not be, that the same designation should be used for the mass of mankind "lying in the wicked one," and for the hitherto comparatively small remnant, the "peculiar people," whose leading distinction is that they are "not of the world, but that God hath chosen them out of the world!" This I have attempted briefly to do elsewhere:* — but the unwarrantableness of all such supplements has been so candidly and so emphatically admitted by a recent writer on

* Essays on Assurance and Pardon.—Essay II. Sec. 12.

the other side of this question,—who has joined heartily in their indignant repudiation, that I should be chargeable with a waste of argument and of time, were I at all to dwell upon it.*—One thing, however, I must be permitted to say; that if *the world* and *the whole world* are to be explained as meaning *not Jews only but Gentiles*, in such a way as to convey the idea, not of Jews and Gentiles generically and universally, but of *God's elect as belonging to both*, as existing among "all kindreds and peoples, and nations, and tongues," —it might be just as well to put in the supplement at once, as thus to explain, or rather to explain away, the literal and obvious sense. "*The world*" and "*the whole world*" mean, without restriction or qualification, what every one understands them to mean:—they are equivalents for *mankind*,—for the *human race*.

But the views which have given occasion to this process of supplementing and qualifying, do not appear to have any solid foundation in Scripture. The making of an atonement does *not* of necessity infer the pardon and salvation of all for whom it is made. As we have showed you at large before, it makes pardon accessible and free to all; but it ensures it to none. The security of it to any lies, not in the atonement itself, but in the sovereign grace of God purposing its effectual application;—

* Dr. Marshall, page 118.

and an interest in its pardoning and saving virtue depends on the sinner's believing, or accepting the divine offer.

This brings us back to the point,—to the principle of harmony, as lying in the distinction between the *public rectoral* design of God in the atonement, —which is *universal;* and the *secret sovereign* design of God, as a Benefactor, who, where all are guilty and meritless, is entitled to "have mercy on whom he will have mercy,"—which is *limited.*— This gives us clear ground;—ground, the occupancy of which, even in the midst of the seeming discordance, makes us feel our minds at ease. It converts the discordance into harmony. By pleading for the universality of the atonement, we are neither, on the one hand, obliged to grant the universality of pardon and salvation, nor, on the other hand, to deny sovereign electing grace. We can, with perfect consistency, disown the one, and embrace the other.—If the *atonement* and the *remission of sins* were necessarily coincident in their extent,—so that atoned or expiated sin must necessarily be pardoned and cancelled sin;—it surely is a remarkable fact, that the same terms of universality are not used alike with regard to both. The force of the following questions ought, I think, to be acknowledged. It will be by every candid mind.—"If, after all, it be true, that by such expressions as these,—'the world,' 'the whole world,' 'all men,' 'every man,'—God means only

the elect, how comes it to pass that equally extensive terms" (that is, with those used respecting atonement) "are not employed in speaking of *election* and *justification?* If these two and the *atonement* be really co-extensive, how do we never read that God *elected* 'the world,' and 'the whole world,' and 'all men,' and 'every man,'—and *justified* 'the world,' and 'the whole world,' and 'all men,' and 'every man?' Limitarians allow that the one might be said as well as the other:—and how comes it to pass, then, that it is never said?—Not only must this be accounted for, but on the face of the case there appears so plain and palpable a difference between the extent of atonement and the extent of election and justification, and the sudden identification of these is so preposterous, that, unless a solid and decisive demonstration be given of their co-extensiveness, the system of limitation falls to the ground, and the universal atonement comes to be received as a matter of course. There is so vast a difference between the language that describes atonement, and that which describes election and justification, in point of extent; and the general easy unstrained meaning of Scripture teaches so plainly the unlimited propitiation by Christ's blood, that it can never be displaced except by solid and irrefragable proof of direct limitation."*—I confess myself unable to see any pos-

* Difficulties connected with the doctrine of a limited atonement.—By Robert Morison, &c.

sibility of satisfactorily answering such questions as are thus put, on the ground of atonement and justification being necessarily co-extensive.—But by admitting the universality of the atonement, and the sovereign restriction of justification to them who believe, and who are the objects of God's gracious choice,—the difference in the language on the one subject, and on the other is at once accounted for. It is precisely what we perceive it must have been, supposing it to have been constructed on this principle. Is not this, then, the truth?—The more restricted terms which are used in regard to actual forgiveness, or justification, are in correspondence with the restrictive character of God's electing love, and of his published determination to justify sinners only through faith. There is a limited *purpose to save*. The atonement is the ground on which this purpose to save rests. But the purpose to save on the ground of the atonement does not, and cannot, enter into the essence of the atonement itself. The purpose, and that on which the purpose rests, can, in no respect, be the same thing. But still, there existed in the divine mind, both in providing and in making the atonement, this sovereign purpose to save,—this sovereign purpose that, while made for mankind,—made for the indefinite design of glorifying God in the forgiveness of sin and the acceptance and salvation of sinners,—it should take actual effect in the salvation of some, while others remained inexcusably guilty in their rejection of it.

And surely the existence of such a purpose gives quite a sufficiency of peculiarity to those texts which use the terms of limitation,—without supposing limitation in the atonement itself; a supposition which gives rise to superlative difficulty, and to every kind of unnaturalness and straining, in the interpretation of those other passages in which the terms are universal, and in which they cannot be understood otherwise than in their universal sense, without rendering them, especially in some of their occurrences, self-contradictory.

I have already alluded to one of the grounds taken, for the explanation of the terms of universality in consistency with the doctrine of a limited atonement. It is the principal one; most commonly, and most strongly urged. I refer to the extension, in gospel times, to the Gentile nations as well as the Jewish, of the mercy of God's covenant, and the blessings of God's salvation. There was now to be no restriction,—no monopoly. The preachers of the cross were to "know no man after the flesh." They were to "call no man common or unclean."—Not that the religion of Moses was ever a system of absolute and designed exclusiveness. God's house was called "a house of prayer for all nations:"—and the chosen people did very wrong in not using efforts, as they had opportunity, to make those nations acquainted with its only divine resident, and to induce them to unite with them in his holy worship. But still, the gospel dis-

pensation was the destined period for throwing open the gates of mercy to the world;—for breaking down the middle wall of partition; for amalgamating Jews and Gentiles in one spiritual community. And there cannot be a doubt, that this grand principle of true church-extension does serve, to a certain extent, and in certain cases, to explain and account for the terms of universality used respecting the purposes of God by the mediatorial work of his Son.—It is one which, from the circumstances of the case, we might naturally expect to find influencing, to no small extent, the phraseology of the New Testament writers. The extension of the knowledge of the true God and his way of salvation to the Gentiles, was to be one of the most remarkable characteristics of the new economy. Nothing, therefore, could be more natural, than that, when the purposes of God by the gospel are the subject, such phrases as "the world," "the whole world," should be used, to signify indefinitely, men of all nations; in conformity with the expressions of the Apostle Paul, in Col. iii. 11, "Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all and in all:"—and in Rom. x. 12, 13, "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him:—for whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."—Nothing is more common than the use of a general designation

in circumstances when that which is affirmed is not literally true respecting all who are comprehended in the designation; but when the truth of it respecting a comparatively small proportion *ascertains or illustrates a general principle*, which bears relation to the whole, although it may only to a very limited extent have been brought into practical application. To exemplify what I mean. When Peter "rehearsed" to his offended brethren at Jerusalem the circumstances of his visit to the house of Cornelius, and its divinely produced and accredited results,—they "glorified God," and said—"Then hath God also *to the Gentiles* granted repentance unto life." "The Gentiles" is a designation of large comprehension; including in it all the nations of the world, except the Jews. I need not say that, in this extensive sense, God had not actually granted repentance to the Gentiles. But Cornelius and his household were Gentiles. In their case, *a principle was ascertained*. It was a specimen of what God meant to do; an indication of his general purpose; the commencement of a great ingathering; the first-fruits of a harvest which he intended ultimately to be reaped over all the earth. In that example, the mind of God was ascertained and certified, that thenceforward "repentance and remission of sins were to be preached, in the name of Jesus, among all nations, having begun at Jerusalem." On the same principle on which, in this passage, "the Gentiles" is a designation for *the*

rest of mankind,—regarded not so much individually and by the poll, as collectively and simply in distinction from the Jews,—so, it is granted, may the phrases "the world," "the whole world," "men," and "all men," be used to denote *the race generally*, as composed of Jews and Gentiles. —But then, be it marked, this very application of the phrases precludes entirely the supposition of any reference, in the use of them, to a definite though concealed *portion of the race,* or of each of these two great divisions of it,—to *the elect* of the Jews and of the Gentiles,—the elect of all nations. The "granting of repentance unto life" evidently signifies, in the spirit of the words, the granting of the means, as revealed in the gospel, of restoration to God, to holiness, and to happiness:—and the granting of it *to the Gentiles,* signifies, with equal clearness, that these means, and the blessings to which they were designed and fitted to introduce, were to be the common privilege of the whole race,—from which the Jew should not be entitled to exclude the Gentile, nor the Gentile the Jew,—nor any one people another,—nor any one individual another;—in a word, that the Lord Jesus Christ was to be "God's salvation to the ends of the earth." This is something quite distinct from the purpose of election. It relates rather to the great general design of God in the atonement,—to furnish the means of pardon and salvation to mankind uni-

versally;—universally, that is, in the *principle* of the scheme, although, in point of fact, millions have never heard of it. It is in this sense,—as providing for our fallen race the means of reconciliation to himself, that the apostle says, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." It is in this sense that sinners are invited to "behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world;" that is, not which expiates the sins of the elect, and by their expiation ensures their consequent remission, but which, by its infinite sufficiency of propitiatory worth, provides the means of free forgiveness to all mankind, — so atoning for sin universally, as to render the pardon of it, in every conceivable instance, honourable to God, and to put it within the reach of every sinner to whose ear the message of mercy comes. —It is in this sense, as we have formerly showed you, that "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved;"—that is, that through his mission and work salvation might be brought nigh to all;—"God so loving the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life."—And, since I have again adverted to this important and conclusive passage,—important, as coming from the lips of Immanuel himself,—and conclusive, as fixing beyond a doubt that *the world* cannot mean *the*

elect,—the latter being evidently coincident in extent, not with *the world*, but with the "*whosoever believeth in him;*"—since, I say, I have again adverted to this passage, I cannot refrain from expressing my surprise at the comment upon it by a most respectable modern writer, to whom I have had occasion repeatedly to refer. Taking the sixteenth and seventeenth verses of the third chapter of the gospel by John together—"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life: for God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved"—he says:—"The latter expression in the seventeenth verse" (namely, "that the world through him might be saved") "explains what is meant by the world. We have only to ask, whether every individual in the world is actually saved by God's only begotten Son, to ascertain the extent of that world which is the object of God's redeeming love: for it must be blasphemy to suppose, that the design for which God sent his Son into the world could, even in the slightest degree, be thwarted."*—I feel myself on very sure ground in just inverting this principle of exposition, and making the terms of the former verse explain the extent of the latter, instead of the terms of the latter being used to explain that of the

* Dr. W. Symington,—pages 284, 285.

former. It would evidently be the height of absurdity to suppose Christ to say, that God so loved the world—in the sense of *the elect in the world*—that whosoever" (of those previously mentioned of course) "believeth in him should not perish,"—that being a position which would imply that some of the elect might not believe, and might thus incur perdition!—Now, as this would be the height of absurdity, "*the world*" that is represented as the object of God's love requires (if we would make any sense of the passage at all) to be interpreted as of more extensive comprehensiveness than the elect. And this clearly settles the sense of the same word, when it is immediately added—"that *the world* through him might *be saved*;"—the sentiment expressed being plainly this, *that salvation might be provided for the world*, while the general provision was to be *effectual to salvation only in the case of those who believed.*

On the same general principle we interpret the strikingly emphatic terms of our text—"He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."—The distinction here so pointedly marked must mean one or other of two things,—either the distinction of the Gentiles from the Jews,—or the distinction of all the rest of mankind, whether Jew or Gentile, from the elect. In whichsoever of the two senses we take it, the all-comprehensiveness of the atonement is most explicitly affirmed. The sense seems

to be excellently given in the words of Scott:—"Moreover, He is the propitiation for their sins:—for, through the atonement of his sacrifice upon the cross, and his subsequent intercession, he rendered a holy and righteous God *propitious* and favourable to sinners; so that He 'waiteth to be gracious,' upon the true mercy-seat, of which that above the ark of the covenant was merely a type and shadow. Nor was the benefit of this propitiation to be confined to the Jewish nation:—on the contrary, sinners all over the whole earth were admitted to share in it:—so that all men, in every land, and through successive generations, were to be invited to come to God, through this all-sufficient atonement, and by this 'new and living way;' and all who accepted of this invitation were as much interested in Christ and all his blessings, as if he had become incarnate, and died upon the cross, for them alone. So that there was most abundant encouragement to every one, in the whole world, who heard the gospel, to repent, and seek salvation by faith in the blood of Christ, but none to any man to continue impenitent and unbelieving."* Indeed to interpret "the whole world" as signifying the elect of God throughout the world,—appears to me to be unauthorised by any parallel occurrence of the phrase; there being no other that does not stand as much in need of the help of this, as this does of the help

* Scott's Commentary on the passage.

of it; no one, that is, plainer than itself, or in which the phraseology has at all more decidedly the meaning required.

The same general principles of interpretation may, and indeed must, be applied to the parallel phraseology—*all, all men, every man*,—when it is used with reference to the extent of the atonement, —or of the purpose of the Redeemer's mediation. —Let me take a specimen here too, for the illustration of other passages as well as of itself. It is 1 Tim. ii. 1–6.—"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." In the 4th verse, it ought to be remarked, there are *two things* which God is alike said to will,—that "*all men should be saved*," and that, in order to this, all men should "*come to the knowledge of the truth*." The language, therefore, requires to be interpreted, not of individuals absolutely and definitely, but of mankind generally and indefinitely. As we know from facts that it is not the positive determination or will of God that

all men should "come to the knowledge of the truth,"—neither is it the fixed purpose, or absolute determination, "that all men should be saved," individually and without exception. The sentiment expressed appears to be—that the salvation of men is the great general design of God in the publication of the message of mercy by the gospel, on the ground of the atonement;—the atonement having been indefinite and universal,—"a ransom for all;" so that there was nothing to exclude any from the free offer of all its saving virtue. The truth revealing the atonement, and pardon and salvation on the ground of it, was meant for universal diffusion; that mankind,—of every nation and kindred and tongue and people, indiscriminately,—might hear, believe, and be saved. This was the will of God.—There does not appear to be any reference in the passage to the doctrine of election; as if the meaning were its being his will that all his elect among the different descriptions and conditions of men should be saved. The idea is,—the unrestricted universality of the great plan of mercy in the gospel, as meant for mankind,—all mankind,—for the world, the whole world.—It is very true, that the context favours the interpretation usually put upon the words,—as meaning men of all ranks, all conditions and descriptions. But then, it is generally forgotten that there is nothing whatsoever restricting this meaning to *some in each* of these ranks and conditions. No exceptions are

made ; no limitation is hinted. So far from it, that with regard to the only one of these ranks and conditions that is specified, we have the term of universality in the injunction to the exercises of prayer, intercession, and thanksgiving :—they are to be for " *all* that are in authority." And it has, I think, been fairly argued, that the injunction and the reason by which it is enforced must be co-extensive :—prayer is commanded for *all men*,—that is, we readily grant, for men of every condition ; but then it is for all of every condition ;—and the reason enforcing the command to pray for all men, is—" for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." What is this, but the comprehensive universality of prayer, recommended and enforced by the comprehensive universality of the divine benevolence,—of the " kindness and love to man, —the philanthropy—of God our Saviour ?"—there being " one God, and one Mediator between—not God and *the elect*, but—between God and *men*, the man Christ Jesus :—who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."

With regard to that numerous class of passages, in which the personal pronouns *we* and *us* and the possessive *our* are used, with reference to believers, —to the people of God,—two remarks must for the present suffice ;—for to enter into any detailed exposition of such texts would detain you beyond all

patient endurance. The first remark is, that in some of those passages, although the writer personates God's people, and speaks in their name, yet it is *as men*,—as a part of their common race, sustaining the characters, and experiencing the joys and the sorrows, of the common humanity; and when that is the case, they have no proper bearing on the question.—The second is, that even when it is otherwise,—when believers are evidently spoken of not merely as a section of mankind, but in distinction from the world, yet when that which in these passages is said of them is in others spoken of more comprehensively as extending to men in general, then we are not bound, though they happen to be the immediate subjects in these passages, to regard what is said of them, or what they say of themselves, as admitting of no reference to any beyond themselves. Allow me to exemplify what I mean by only one instance. You will find it in 1 John iv. 10—16, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And we have seen, and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is

the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." —In this delightful passage, you will observe, John begins with *we* and *us*, and ends with *the world*. That God loved *them*, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for *their* sins, was in no respect, therefore, in the apprehension of this apostle, inconsistent with his being, at the same time, "the Saviour of *the world*."—And so, when Paul, speaking of himself and his fellow-believers, says—Rom. viii. 32, "He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not, with him, also freely give us all things;"—granting that the whole context relates to believers, yet may not the consideration contained in this verse be held out, in perfect consistency with the whole tenor of the gospel, to sinners universally, as an inducement to them to believe in the same Saviour, that, through this faith, they may enjoy the same divine pledge of all that is for their good?—That God gave up his Son for such as already believed, does not at all imply that he did not give him up for others. All sinners, without exception, are warranted by the declarations of the gospel to believe that he was given up *for them;* and indeed, unless they believe this, they believe nothing that can give them effectual or permanent confidence towards God. It is when they believe this, that

they come to experience that assurance of all good which the verse expresses:—and Christ having "given himself a ransom *for all*,"—and "God having so loved *the world* as to give his only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life,"—having "sent his Son,—that *the world* through him might be saved,"—it is a truth which every sinner is invited by the God of all grace to believe for himself, and to rejoice in all the peace and confidence and hope which the faith of it imparts.

And what is our text but a condensed and forcible statement of the same thing? Christ's being "the propitiation for *our* sins," is in no way inconsistent with his being, at the same time, "the propitiation for the sins of *the whole world*." Believers delight in the assurance of this. It is their encouragement in presenting the gospel to all, without difference, to whom they have the opportunity of making it known. They have the certainty given by God's own word, with regard to every fellow-sinner, that he has only to believe for himself what they have believed for themselves, in order to his immediately entering on all the blessedness springing from an interest in God's love, which they enjoy.

I should have called your attention at some length to the contents of that very important but somewhat difficult passage, to which, amongst others, I made a reference towards the commence-

ment of this discourse,—the closing verses of the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans,—but for two considerations;—first, that I have offered some observations upon it, in reference to the same subject that now occupies our attention, elsewhere;*—and secondly, that to do it full justice would require more time than it is possible now to spare. I might add a third consideration,—that although the passage is far from being without its difficulties on any hypothesis, you will not be very greatly at a loss in bringing to bear upon it—if I have succeeded in making them sufficiently clear—the great general principles of harmony laid down in what has already been said.

I must hasten to a close.—Deferring till the next and concluding discourse, such general improvement of the whole subject as I may then deem suitable, I would only say at present to my *fellow-christians,*—Imitate, with regard to this and to all other subjects, the example of the noble-minded Bereans, which stands recorded with special divine commendation:—"Search the Scriptures daily, whether these things be so." We should be sorry if you took any thing upon trust. What is preached to you as the *truth* of God, be it yours to examine by the *word* of God, the only authoritative standard of that truth. Test it well. To take aught upon our dictation, would be to violate the

* Essays on Assurance and Pardon—Essay II. sec. 15.

very obligation by which we ourselves profess to feel our own consciences bound,—and to alienate from you that right of private judgment,—that right to inquire, and think, and believe for yourselves, which is the exclusive privilege of no man and no class of men, but belongs alike, by divine charter, to all. We wish you, we pray you, and, had we the authority, we should enjoin you, to exercise it. We do not believe, that, with a simple heart, a candid mind, and the prayer of faith for the divine Spirit's guidance, you will find much to perplex you. On this, as on all points connected with the sinner's pardon and peace, and the saint's progressive holiness and comfort, and both in union with the glory of God, the Bible is a plain Book. It gives no ambiguous responses. They who come to the Oracle with a right frame of spirit, will experience the truth of the divine assurance—"I never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain!"—What I have spoken to you on the subject of these discourses, I have spoken with the impression deep upon my spirit, that there is not a more flagrant crime in the catalogue of human trespasses, than that of wilfully affixing the signature of the God of heaven to what has not the sanction of his authority;—of saying, "Thus saith the Lord, when the Lord hath not spoken." I need not say, therefore, that I believe it to be God's own truth. It has, I am satisfied, the great essential tendencies of all that comes from him:

—it glorifies himself; it humbles the sinner; it promotes holiness; it harmonizes the divine testimonies. Examine it by these tests. I am convinced it will be found to abide them all. "Consider what I say; and the Lord give you understanding in all things!"

My *fellow-sinners:* — there are two things against which, in a single word or two, I would affectionately warn you.

In the *first* place:—Beware of allowing yourselves to be diverted by such discussions from considering and laying to heart your own immediate and vital interest in the great ends of the Redeemer's atonement. Beware of attending to these discussions as a mere intellectual exercise,—a mere exhibition of controversial gladiatorship between party combatants; of being mere spectators in this arena; mere judges of the comparative skill of the opponents, and the weight of their respective arguments.—Forget not,—O forget not,—that you have a personal concern in the great subject of controversy. I do not of course mean to say, that I am indifferent whether you examine and weigh the evidence adduced from the word of God, or not. Why should I have thought of arguing the point at all, but that the arguments might be weighed and appreciated? No. That which I fear and deprecate is, your regarding it *merely* as a point of controversy in a theological system;—and your being satisfied with merely coming to the con-

clusion on which side orthodoxy lies;—and your consequently holding the doctrine which you may think has been best supported, merely as an article of your professed creed,—a speculative opinion in your scheme of divinity.—Ah! my friends, what real good would this do you? How many have professed, as a part of their system, the *doctrine of regeneration*, who have remained, to their dying day, giving evidence that the change expressed by the term has never passed upon them! And so may a man profess to hold, and that with a jealous tenacity, whatever view of the atonement he may conceive to be the orthodox one,—and continue all his life a stranger to the pardoning efficacy of the blood that "cleanseth from all sin."—Beware of this. We bring the Saviour near to you. We tell you of his having made an infinitely precious atonement—an atonement, not for this man's sins and that man's sins only, but for the sins of "the whole world,"—a propitiation for all, and therefore for you. We tell you of "God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."—But what avails it, if you do not "receive the reconciliation?"—if you are not in earnest about your own interest in the pardoning mercy of God, through the merits of the great propitiation?—if you still leave reason for the compassionate Redeemer to complain—"Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life?" And

this, forget not, he said to the most speculatively orthodox of the Jewish people,—to the professors of "the strictest sect of that religion." Let all among ourselves beware, lest, under the garb of an orthodox but heartless profession, they give him cause to say it still.

Secondly—While we preach to you a universal atonement and a free salvation;—while we tell you, and delight in telling you, that the greatest sinner on earth may have immediate pardon and peace with God, if he will only believe that this atonement was made for him, as it was made for all,—and that God "delighteth in mercy," and has made this delight apparent in providing and opening a way for its free and honourable exercise through the blood of his Son;—while we assure you that there is nothing between any sinner and life, but his accepting the offered grace on the ground of the gospel propitiation;—we would have you all to bear in mind the connexion between the peace which is thus introduced into the conscience, and the holy love which, at the same time, takes possession of the heart. We would have you all to remember, that there is no true evangelical peace, unaccompanied by evangelical holiness,—no rightly-grounded assurance, without the "faith that worketh by love." The same blood that pacifies the conscience, must purify the heart. The peace which it imparts to the conscience, while it springs from the assurance of "grace reigning through

righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord," is held in connexion with its "purging that conscience from dead works, to serve the living God."—Christ "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." The end of Christ's death, then, has not been answered in you, if you are not thus purified. "There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." It is a blessed and soul-cheering truth. But let it never be dissevered from the further truth, that all who *are* in Christ Jesus evince their connexion and vital union with him, by "walking not after the flesh but after the spirit."

DISCOURSE VII.

PRACTICAL IMPROVEMENT. — INFERENCES FROM THE ATONEMENT RESPECTING THE FINAL CONDEMNATION OF THE IMPENITENT. — APPLICATION TO DIFFERENT DESCRIPTIONS OF CHARACTER.

LUKE XXIII. 31.—"FOR IF THEY DO THESE THINGS IN A GREEN TREE, WHAT SHALL BE DONE IN THE DRY?"

IT is not my purpose, in concluding these discourses, to treat at large the important subject of the practical tendencies of the great doctrine we have been considering; whether viewed in regard to its *nature*, or in regard to its *extent*. In the former of these two views of it, I have, at some length, endeavoured to illustrate its influence on the character of the believers of it, elsewhere;* and in the latter, such illustration has, to a certain degree, been blended with the preceding discussions.—The text which I have just announced will

* Discourses on the principal points of the Socinian Controversy.—Disc. viii.

at once convey to my hearers a general impression of the train of thought which has suggested itself to my mind, as a suitable conclusion to our subject, —and which it is my design, in the present discourse, to pursue. It is,—the alarming character of the doctrine; and the effect which, in this aspect of it, it ought to have on unbelieving sinners, on the dispositions and conduct of the people of God towards them, and on the manner in which they ought to be dealt with by the ministers of Christ.

But the text itself must first be introduced and explained. It has a more immediate and a more comprehensive application. Both are alike legitimate.

Among the many excellencies of the Redeemer's all-perfect character, no one appears more strikingly, or with more captivating effect, in the history of his life, than the absence of all selfishness,—the constant ascendancy of a purely disinterested benevolence. Never on earth was there a mind possessed of such sensibility to suffering; and yet never was there a mind so nobly generous in enduring it. When the words of our text were uttered, he was in the hands of his malignant enemies. It was, in his own language, "their hour, and the power of darkness." He had just come from the mysterious agonies of Gethsemane, and from the indignities and cruelties of the Sanhedrim and the Pretorium; and he was on his way to sufferings still more severe,—the bodily tortures, and the mental con-

flicts of Calvary. He had been relieved of the burden of his cross, not from any relentings of compassion, but because, under the weight of that burden, his exhausted frame could not keep pace with the cagerness of his exasperated persecutors to hurry him to death.—But while the feeling of infatuated and pitiless hostility prevailed, it was not universal. There were, amongst the crowd, some whose bosoms did not sympathise with the blood-thirsty rage. A part of these we may conceive to have been moved by a merely natural tenderness, which would have felt for sufferings however merited ;—while in others there mingled with the sensibilities of nature the emotions of spiritual gratitude, and the affectionate admiration of his unblemished innocence,—of the union, so unprecedented, of loftiness and lowliness, of purity and love, by which his whole life had been distinguished. "There followed him," the twenty-seventh verse informs us, "a great company of people, and of women who also bewailed and lamented him."

These wailings of sympathy were not, on the Saviour's part, disregarded :—but it is remarkable how entirely, in the notice he takes of them, *self* is excluded. Instead of being absorbed in his own distresses, past, present, or in prospect,—instead of enumerating and dwelling upon them, in all their aggravations, with the view of drawing forth the utterance of still deeper and livelier condolence,—he turns the thoughts of those whom he addresses

to the woes which were awaiting themselves and their offspring, and that devoted city which was now filling up the measure of its long-accumulating guilt. On former occasions, he had wept tears of bitterness over Jerusalem, in the anticipation of what was speedily to come upon it:—"If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes:—for the days will come upon thee, when thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side; and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee: and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."*—"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee,—how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings! and ye would not. Behold your house is left unto you desolate!"†—In our text and its context, he is looking forward to the same fearful scenes:—scenes, respecting which, with a full view before his mind, in the glance of the moment, of all the past and all the future history of our world, he had said:—"For then shall be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until that time, no, nor ever shall be."‡—

* Luke xix. 41-44. † Matt. xxiii. 37, 38. ‡ Matt. xxiv. 21.

To the women who followed him with their tears and lamentations, the terms of his address were singularly appropriate. He predicts the near approach of the time, when even amongst the women of Judah,—with whom, in consequence of the expectation of the promised Messiah, the desire of children was stronger than in any other nation on earth,—barrenness should be the envied blessing; and the mothers of Israel should mourn, in anguish of spirit, even over the living fruit of the womb; when so heavy should be the pressure of affliction, that death should be coveted rather than life:—"But Jesus, turning unto them, said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the breasts which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us."—Then, in our text, he accounts for all. He traces the coming vengeance to the treatment of himself. He infers the fearfulness of the impending visitation of heaven from the scene that was now acting before their eyes;—from what they were now doing to him, the dreadfulness of what should be done to them;—from the bitterness of the cup they were the guilty instruments of mixing for him, the intolerable nature of the ingredients of the one which was in preparation for themselves, and of which

they were soon to wring out the dregs:—"FOR IF THEY DO THESE THINGS IN A GREEN TREE, WHAT SHALL BE DONE IN THE DRY?"

The terms are figurative; and the general spirit and import of the figure are sufficiently plain. The green tree is, on different occasions, with the scripture writers, the emblem of the good or righteous man:—and surely never could the application of it, in this sense, be more forcibly appropriate than now; when the goodness, the righteousness, was perfect; when the tree was one, of whose verdant loveliness not a twig or a leaf was blighted.—At times, the green tree and the dry were, by their own prophets, brought into contrast, as the representatives of the righteous and the wicked. Thus, Jehovah commands Ezekiel to "say to the forest of the south—Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I will kindle a fire in thee, and it shall devour *every green tree in thee and every dry tree:*"—and he immediately afterward uses more literal terms, which may be considered as explanatory of the figure:—"Behold I am against thee, and will draw forth my sword out of his sheath; and will cut off from thee *the righteous and the wicked.*"*—The saying is traditionally reported, indeed, to have been a proverbial one among the Jews,—that *two dry branches will burn a green one;* meaning that a combination of wicked

* See Ezek. xx. 27; with xxi. 3.

men may corrupt, and bring divine judgments upon, a good man.

The general force of the words, then, is sufficiently plain:—if such indignities be heaped upon me,—if by me, an innocent person, sinless in my humanity, infinitely and essentially holy in my higher nature, such sufferings are endured,—"where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"—If, to the utmost extent to which human malignity can reach, these sufferings are inflicted by the hands of men, and of the very men to whom, in the first instance, I have been sent to minister, and to work out salvation,—what must be the desert, and what the retribution, of the guilty agents?—If in the green tree, so unfit for burning, such a fire is kindled, what is to become of those who, by their unbelief and rebellion have been fitting themselves, like the dry wood, as fuel for the devouring flame?—If, in the text, the pronoun "*they*" is considered as having a specific reference, that reference must be either to the *Jews* or to the *Romans*.—It may refer to the Jews,—the inhabitants of the devoted city,—the chief perpetrators of those deeds which were provoking, from the hand of God, the coming judicial calamities. If they, having "killed the prophets, and stoned those that were sent unto them," are now doing such things as these to one higher in dignity and holier in character than all who have gone before him,—what must be the vengeance that in-

pends over them, fitted, as they shall thus be, by this last and most flagrant of all their acts of apostasy, for the full infliction of the long-threatened judgments of Jehovah!—Or it may refer to the Romans, the immediate executioners upon Jesus of the sentence extorted against him by the furious importunity of Jewish malice. If these Gentile instruments are divinely permitted to inflict such sufferings upon one so undeserving of them, what shall be the weight of vengeance which these same instruments shall be commissioned to execute on the guilty people, who are thus bringing "wrath upon themselves to the uttermost?"—There does not appear, however, to be any necessity for supposing the pronoun to have a specific reference at all. The phrase—"if they do these things,"—may, according to no unusual idiom, be interpreted as equivalent to—"if these things are done:"—if, by the appointment of God, although by human agency, such things are done in the green tree,—such sufferings fall on one so innocent,—what shall be the doom of those "sinners against their own souls," who are acting so infatuated a part!—In this last view of the phraseology, which is probably the right one, the text has its full emphasis of application to all the unbelieving enemies and despisers, without exception, of the Son of God.

I may here, for the sake of illustration, notice, that the *spirit* or *principle* of the question is very much the same with that of 1 Peter iv. 17, 18.

"For the time is come, that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" Without entering into any critical or expository detail, the meaning of these verses appears substantially to be:—"If such be the evil and hatefulness of all sin in God's sight, that his own house, his own spiritual family, must be purified from it by the fire of testing and terrible judgments;—if even those who are his renewed children, and, as such, the objects of his fatherly love, must be visited with the severity of corrective trials, in order to take away the very remnants that still cleave to them of the accursed thing,—what shall be the end of those whose unforgiven guilt lies upon their heads in all its accumulated enormity? —what their end, who have refused the only shelter from the bursting storm of divine retribution, and, in such refusal, have added to the catalogue of their previous sins one weightier than all combined which that catalogue contains!—When this apostle uses the phrase—"if the righteous *scarcely be saved,*" he does not, assuredly, mean, that there is any doubt about the absolute and infinite sufficiency of the ground of their salvation:—or that there is any uncertainty in the result:—or that there is any stintedness or imperfection in the final enjoyment:—or that, when believers come to stand

before the judgment seat at last, it may go hard with them,—so that they may barely come off with acquittal,—the poised balance vibrating in long uncertainty, and scrimply turning on the favourable side,—the justifying righteousness of their Lord forming no more than a counterpoise, and hardly that, to their own demerits. He means none of these things. His language refers to *the difficulty of bringing them through* to their final salvation,—to the necessity of employing the rod and the furnace,—the process, in many instances severe, of correction and purification,—of bringing them to "the wealthy place through the fire and the water,"—of their "entering the kingdom through much tribulation,"—of their being "chastened of the Lord, that they might not be condemned with the world." If "fiery trial" be required, and his hatred of sin and his love to his children will not allow him to withhold it, for purging out the remaining alloy of their holiness,—what must his enemies have to look for from his abhorrence of evil, in whom sin exists not as the mere alloy of a better material, but all is sin together.

While the principle and general spirit of the text and of the passage in Peter, are alike,—the force of its application is incomparably stronger in the one case than in the other. In the blessed Immanuel, as has already been said, there was immaculate purity—innocence absolutely perfect, in his assumed nature and in his life,—and this, associated with

the very sanctity of godhead itself. He was now, as mediator, standing in the room of sinners. He was enduring his sufferings on their account. The chastisement of their peace was upon him. And if such were the sufferings which came upon him, when sustaining the character of the guilty's substitute, and charged with the expiation of iniquity,—what must be the judicial retribution in reserve for those infatuated men who persist in their rebellion, who hold out against his love as well as against his authority,—against his grace as well as against his justice,—and who by their sins are preparing themselves for the coming wrath, even as wood is dried for the furnace!

The bearing of all this on our present subject arises from what has just been alluded to,—the substitutionary and propitiatory character of the sufferings of Jesus. But for this,—had he merely suffered, as a persecuted prophet and martyr, at the hands of men,—the words would hardly have admitted of any general application,—of any application beyond the immediate perpetrators of the deeds of ingratitude and cruelty,—his own wicked countrymen, the Jews. And hence I am led to observe, that in order to bring out fully the force of the Saviour's language, there ought to be taken into account at once the *dignity and character of the sufferer,*—the *nature and amount of his sufferings,*—and the *end for which they were all endured.* We are by no means warranted to limit the energy

of his words by the conceptions which were entertained of him on the part of those to whom they were originally addressed. Even such amongst them as believed him to be the Messiah, had very partial and confused ideas both as to his person and as to the "work given him to do." But when used by himself, they must be interpreted with the full emphasis and conclusiveness imparted to them by all that he knew himself to be. They must be understood as proceeding upon the true view, both of what he was, and of what he had come into the world to do. These things the full and clear discoveries of the gospel have now given us distinctly and certainly to know; and we are more than entitled, we are bound, to explain his words accordingly. Observe, then—

1. We have formerly had under our special notice the *dignity* and the *character* of the sufferer. The intimations of Scripture on these points are neither equivocal nor rare. They are frequent and explicit. I must now assume, without going back upon former ground, at once the divinity of his person, and the sinless perfection of his character. Yes: in the midst of all the appearances and all the realities of mean and suffering humanity, this "man of sorrows," whose "visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men," was "God manifested in the flesh," —"over all, God, blessed for ever!"—and his entire character—"holy, harmless, undefiled, and

separate from sinners,"—without the slightest taint of hereditary or acquired impurity,—was in beautiful harmony with this view of his person. I state the simple facts at present. To dwell upon them, would be to repeat; and to apply them, to anticipate. Such was the person, and such the character, of him who uttered the text:—and yet we have to notice—

2. It is the utterance of *a sufferer*.—And here too we have to look farther than the mere outward appearance. We should form a very unworthy and inadequate conception of his sufferings, were we to confine ourselves to what was external merely,—to what was inflicted on his body by the hands of men,—to the scourge, and the thorns, and the nails, and the cross. These, without doubt, inflicted excruciating torture; but not more than many a martyr has endured for Christ. Even to these, indeed, the divine dignity of the sufferer,—who, "though he was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, had made himself of no reputation, and taken upon him the form of a servant, and been made in the likeness of men,—and, being found in fashion as a man, was now humbling himself, and in the very act of becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,"—imparted an infinitude of atoning worth. *Such* a sufferer was the wonder of the universe!—But still, of his agonies themselves the chief ingredients were mental. They were in his soul. With

a spirit so exquisitely susceptible, from the delicate and perfect moral harmony with which every chord in his bosom was strung, what tongue can tell, what heart but his own can conceive, the amount of anguish he endured from the cruel ingratitude of men, from the malignant temptations of devils, and, above all, from the mysterious judicial abandonment of the Father that sent him,—the incomprehensible hidings of his countenance,—to whom his love was of such a character and such an intensity, as to render the very anticipation of this part of the closing scene so overwhelming! It was this, — this begun, and this anticipated, — that wrung his holy soul, when, in the garden, in his own plaintive words, it was "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," and when thrice, "with strong crying and tears," and with growing earnestness, he prayed—"Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!"—and it was under the pressure of the full reality of this, that on the cross he uttered the cry of thrilling horror—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—Various, it is true, were the bitter ingredients of his cup;—the desertion of friends, in his hour of extremity;—submission to the insolence of power, which a word of his lips, or a volition of his mind, could have annihilated;—reproaches that broke his heart;—shame and contumely and mockery, the scornful "contradiction of sinners against himself," when "he gave his back to the smiters, and his cheek to them that pluck-

ed off the hair," and "hid not his face from shame and spitting,"—deeply feeling all the while that they by whom he was thus "set at nought" "hated him without a cause;" — the lingering agonies of the most cruel of deaths,—during even the tortures of which the insults of his thankless and pitiless murderers, instead of being suspended, were cast upon him with a still keener virulence,—and during which too, doubtless, "the Prince of this world came," and, though he "found nothing in him," yet tormented his holy soul with his hellish temptations:—but last of all, and heaviest of all, those woes which came from a source infinitely above either fallen man or fallen angel,—when "it pleased Jehovah to bruise him, and to put him to grief;" but woes these, as we have already said, so strange, so mysterious, so remote from all the possibility of any mere creature's experience, that we "cannot order our speech respecting them by reason of darkness." Oh! he was not, like an ordinary martyr, the mere tormented victim of a deadly persecuting malice. His were sorrows, such as no martyr, either before or after him, ever did, or ever could, suffer. They were the expiatory sorrows to which martyrs, as well as others, owed their redemption; sorrows, by which theirs were converted into joys. The cruel sting of his death was what took the sting out of theirs. The hiding of God's countenance from him, was the "lifting up of the light of that

countenance" upon them. His conflict was their peace. His death was their life.—And this naturally leads me to

3. The *object*, or *design*, of his sufferings.—The *cause* of them (as largely shown heretofore) was *sin;* and the *object* of them, its expiation. The sinless Saviour could suffer nothing on his own account. All that he endured, from Bethlehem to Calvary,—from the manger to the cross,—was vicarious and propitiatory. Every pain of his body, and every pang of his soul, was for sin,—for others' sin. Our imputed guilt, for which he had, voluntarily and graciously, undertaken to atone, was the bitterness of his cup; the rankling and deadly venom of those "arrows of the Almighty which were within him," and which "drank up his spirit." From first to last,—and especially in that hour of darkness, in which all the varieties of woe, from men, from devils, and from God, were so fearfully concentrated,—he "suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."

Let me now, then, proceed to lay before you those lessons of salutary alarm, which the sufferings of Christ, taken in connexion with his dignity, with his character, and with his purpose in enduring them, are fitted to impress upon our minds.—These are, especially, two in number: namely, the CERTAINTY and the FEARFULNESS, of the penal consequences of sin to the unbelieving and impenitent.

1. In the first place, their CERTAINTY.—"If these things be done in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" There is no evading the conclusion. It is infallibly sure. Had it been possible for sin to be pardoned, and for sinners to be saved, without the atonement made by the sufferings and death of the Son of God,—we may be very sure that these sufferings and that death would never have been endured. Never for such a purpose would "the Word have been made flesh." We argue this on the ground of divine wisdom, divine justice, and divine goodness. That wisdom does nothing in vain. That justice could not afflict the guiltless, unless with his own consent, and for an adequate end,—an end in full harmony with its nature, and necessary for the maintenance of its claims. That goodness could inflict no needless suffering; and especially on one who was the object of God's infinite love,—of the full complacency of his whole nature. Surely, when he in whom his soul delighted prayed that the cup might pass from him, and put his plea on the footing of possibility—"If it be *possible*, let this cup pass from me!"—that cup could never have been drunk;—the Father's relenting love must have dashed it from his lips,—had it been possible for the salvation of a guilty world to be effected without it,—effected, that is, as alone it could be effected, consistently with the untarnished glory of the divine name. The very fact, then, of his having drunk

it, becomes thus a conclusive evidence of its moral necessity to the ends of divine mercy. And hence too, in this fact there is read to us, as sinners, another lesson,—the solemn lesson of the impossibility of unrepented sin passing with impunity under God's holy and righteous government; a lesson, surely, such as nothing but the most wilful and obstinate perverseness can misunderstand. In the sufferings of his beloved Son, Jehovah holds up sin to the reprobation of the universe. He brands it, deeply and visibly, with the stigma of his abhorrence. The fact of such an atonement having been made, instead of being a quietus to the conscience of impenitent transgressors, — of those who, in any way, are living without God,— ought rather, without leaving one lingering doubt, to assure them of the certainty of their perdition. There is not a surer proof of the reality of hell, than the cross:—not one clearer evidence of the certainty of future vengeance, than the very means provided for averting it:—not one more infallible premonition of the penal awards of justice, than the very ground laid for the honourable extension of mercy. Had not the punishment of iniquity, under the divine government, been a sure and settled thing, we should never have heard of such an atonement, or of any atonement, being made for it. And thus, the same propitiatory sufferings, the faith of which gives to the believing soul peace and security and the confidence of salvation, ought to

read to the unbelieving and impenitent, as from the very throne of the God with whom they have to do, the assurance of their destruction. Calvary confirms the sentences of Sinai. What Justice thundered from Sinai, Mercy, though with tearful eye, yet with unfaltering voice, whispers from Calvary:—and the announcement (would sinners but think of the circumstances in which it is made) is more fearful in the whisper than in the thunder. In both, it is God that speaks; and the lesson is the same:—but in the latter case, the very fact of its coming from the lips of Mercy renders it the more appalling.—And this suggests our next particular. I said—

2. That along with the *certainty* of the doom of the impenitent, there is also testified by the cross its FEARFULNESS:—"if these things are done in the green tree, WHAT shall be done in the dry?"—The question will bear no other interpretation than —HOW AWFUL will the visitation be? The judgments executed on the Jewish people in this world, fearful as they were, were but the foretaste and assurance of consequences of their guilt unutterably more tremendous awaiting them in the world to come. Whatever in his law Jehovah has threatened, as the just penalty of its transgressors, the sufferings of an atoning Saviour repeat and confirm in all its extent. Oh! if we form our judgment of the amount of the penalty from the amount of the expiation, no light thought of it will for one

moment "lodge within us." Nowhere is the lesson more alarmingly uttered than from the cross, that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." It could not be for the effecting of any trivial deliverance,—a deliverance from any light and temporary calamity,—that such scenes were ever transacted on earth as those of Gethsemane and Calvary. They avouch, I repeat, the denunciations of the law, in all their awfulness. They read a dreadful commentary on the curse under which sinners are lying, and on the death which they must die, when they are uninterested in the virtue of the great propitiation. And all continue without an interest in it, who believe not in the Son of God,—who neglect their soul's salvation, refuse or slight his grace, and go on in their trespasses. There is not, in the whole bible, a plainer lesson, than that such, dying in their sins, shall perish. To all their other sins they add the sin of unbelief; to their sins against the authority of law, the sin of the rejection of grace. Atonement has been made for their sins; but they will not believe it. They disown the propitiation. And thus the guilt of all their trespasses, as transgressors of the law, lies upon them, with the addition to it,—no light one,—of the rejected offers of reconciliation from the God of mercy. The wrath of God *is* upon them, and, if they persist in their present course, must *abide* upon them.—And O my fellow-sinners, "who knoweth the power of

his anger?" Look here, and judge of it. "If these things were done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" Behold the man! Behold a betrayed, insulted, falsely accused, unjustly condemned, buffetted, scourged, tempted, agonized, crucified, dying Saviour,—and judge of it! Think what he was; think what he became; think what he endured; and judge of it! Oh! there are terrors at Calvary, as well as promises and mercies; "the terrors of the Lord," as well as his "loving-kindnesses."—It is not my purpose to "harrow up your souls" by any description of the miseries of the lost. The theme is one on which I dare not indulge imagination; and on which there never can be pleasure in dwelling. It may well suffice to take the Saviour's own figures for our purpose. Figures, without doubt, they are, both the one and the other:—but they convey, in their unexplained awfulness, an impression such as no uninspired description could possibly produce:—"Their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched!"—The words of our text, coming from the same lips, teach the same lesson:—"If they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"—And a singular and impressive fact it is,—full of alarm,—that no stronger terms are to be found in the entire bible, respecting the fearfulness of future punishment, than those which were used by him, the end of whose coming and of whose sufferings was to save from its infliction. Well,

then, might he say, who knew so perfectly wherein —both as to forfeiture and endurance—the loss consisted,—"What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

Having thus endeavoured to explain and enforce the *principle* of the text,—let me now, as its practical improvement, expostulate a little with two or three different descriptions of self-deceivers.

1. The scene which the text brings before us, is one of surpassingly touching interest to every heart that remains at all alive to the emotions of benevolent sensibility. Now, there are some, who are not a little pleased with themselves on account of the conscious TENDERNESS OF THEIR FEELINGS. They enter warmly into the circumstances of the scene. They admire the sensibility of those who followed the suffering Redeemer with their tears and wailings. They sympathise with their emotions. *Their* eyes are melted too by the tale of the cross. They flatter themselves, that they belong not to the same class with those hardened sinners, who, with such unfeeling heartlessness, set themselves against him, and persecuted unto death the pattern of benevolence and virtue. They would have been far from taking part with them—ruthless, unrelenting wretches as they were:—and, thus they are led to think that the fearful lesson of warning embodied in the text, has no application to *them*. They frown on those who acted the part described; while with inward self-complacency,

they smile upon themselves.—Now, amiable and engaging as the natural sensibilities of the heart are, I would, with all affection and fidelity, remind such persons, that *sensibility is not religion*. We are exceedingly prone to impose upon ourselves, by mistaking the one for the other. Some of these "daughters of Jerusalem," I doubt not, might think well of themselves for the tenderness of their hearts, as it stood in contrast with the desperate obduracy of those who were pursuing to death the innocent victim of their intemperate fury. And so may many impose upon themselves still. The feelings of mere nature may be softened and melted by the exquisitely pathetic narrative of the Redeemer's sufferings; while there is, in the heart, an entire destitution of any thing approaching to spiritual gratitude and love to him, in the capacity in which those sufferings were endured by him. Tears may flow for the sufferer, while alas! there are no flowing tears,—not one drop of penitential tenderness,—for those sins which were the guilty cause of all that he endured. There may be nothing more in the tears, and nothing better, than the sensibility that is awakened by the sight or the hearing of any scene of distress. And not a little of such constitutional sensibility there may be, while its subjects, indulging as they do their self-complacency in their own gentleness of nature, have their hearts still in a state of unsubdued enmity against God, and, instead of humble submission to

the grace of the gospel, cherish a proud and fretful opposition to its mortifying terms. Allow some of these sons and daughters of sensibility credit, in the sight of God, for their delicate and amiable sympathies,—and they will appear as saints of the first magnitude. But when you tell them of the worthlessness of all their feelings, and all their tears and sighs,—of their being absolutely and utterly unavailing towards an interest in the divine favour,—of their weighing nothing whatever in the matter of their acceptance with God;—and of the necessity of their relinquishing all dependence on every thing of the kind, and on whatever else that is good they may fancy to exist in themselves,—and of their receiving mercy through the Redeemer's atonement, on the very same ground, and in the very same way, with the most profligate and hardened of male or female characters;—the spirit of offended pride rises within them; and the mood of soft and sentimental tenderness gives place to one of haughty scorn, and indignant resentment. But faithfulness requires me to say to all who are thus unsubmissive to the *grace* of the gospel salvation, that, let their natural sensibilities be what they may, they must be ranked among the enemies of that Saviour by whom the salvation was wrought. They are strangers—utter strangers—to the true spirit of christianity. The mere *tragedy* of the cross may melt them; but the *doctrine* of the cross dissatisfies and provokes them. Their very self-

complacency in their own amiableness contributes to steel their hearts against the requisition of that spirit of entire self-renunciation, and reliance on free mercy through atoning blood, which is the very first and most essential element in the true believer's character. Even to such, therefore, there may be abundant reason to say—"Weep for yourselves!" —"for if these things be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" There may be,—nay we feel every day that there is,—much that is amiable and attractive to our affections in these natural sensibilities:—but alas! daily experience at the same time shows, that they are perfectly compatible with a state of utter and even jealous and irritable alienation from the humbling doctrine of the cross,—the doctrine of free, unconditional, sovereign mercy, through the blood of the atoning Lamb of God. And the more, in associating with such characters, we feel the attraction of their amiableness, the more solicitous should we become to undeceive them, to rid them of their illusions, and to bring them to the spirit of the gospel,—to self-renouncing reliance on the great atonement.

2. There is another class of persons, to whom our subject naturally leads us to allude, who plume themselves on the high and liberal sentiments they hold on the subject of the RIGHTS OF CONSCIENCE AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.—They condemn, in terms of no measured reprobation, the conduct of the Jews to Jesus of Nazareth, as a

scandalous violation of these rights and of this freedom. They would not for the world have taken part with them or given them any countenance, in a course of procedure so unworthy of all that is just, and generous, and high-minded. They are the friends of liberty. They hold in detestation every thing bearing the remotest semblance of persecution. They expatiate warmly on this view of the case ; and feel no small self-complacency and elation of mind, in propounding and vindicating their favourite principles. They regard all interference with full freedom of thought and speech in matters of religion and conscience, as odious and criminal ; and in their forswearing of all such iniquitous and oppressive principles, they place no small part of their merit and their righteousness. They are quite confident, that on the broad ground of religious liberty they would have sided with Jesus against his bigotted enemies, and done what they could to protect him from their fanatical fury.—I need hardly say to any who know aught of what the religion of the bible is, that, how friendly soever such men may be to the principles of religious liberty,—and how right soever they may be in their attachment to those principles, they may, notwithstanding, be determined opponents to the doctrine and the spirit of the gospel. *Zeal for religious liberty is not religion.* How sincerely and how eloquently soever they may plead for Jesus and his followers, on the ground of the inalienable birthright of a

free conscience,—they may be "enemies of the cross of Christ,"—proud contemners of his grace, and disowners of his authority. They may even stand the higher in their own estimation on this very account,—that disbelieving and holding in scorn, as they do, the tenets of the persecuted, they, nevertheless, can take their part on the grand and broad principles of religious freedom and equal rights. They dislike and despise the doctrines; but that is no reason why the holders of them should be wronged.

There *are* such men. But we dare not allow them,—even although agreeing with them in their favourite principles, and possibly indebted to them for their resolute advocacy of human rights,—we cannot allow them to fancy themselves safe. Though friends of religious liberty, they are foes to religion. They are lovers of the rights of conscience, but haters of the principles of the gospel. It is all one to them, whether a man be a Protestant or a Papist, a Christian, a Mohammedan, or a Pagan. It is not for the one or for the other that they plead, but for all alike. And they are right in this impartial application of their principles, while they are sadly wrong in the indifference with which they regard all diversities in religious belief and practice.—We would entreat such men to contemplate the scene which the text brings before them, in another light;—to investigate the claims of a suffering Redeemer;—to examine the

evidences of his divine commission, and the end for which that commission was given and executed; to consider his sufferings in the light in which the gospel testimony represents them, as the divinely sanctioned and accepted atonement for sin; and to make that atonement the foundation, and the sole foundation, of their hopes. Be assured, your attachment to liberty, however right in itself, will not save you. Unless you have an interest,—a personal interest, by faith, in the expiatory virtue of this sufferer's substitutionary obedience unto death, you must stand exposed to all the effects of the displeasure and curse of God, for your sins. To you, as well as to others, the solemn warning of the text applies in full force:—"If these things be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"

3. There are multitudes whose minds are buoyed up in thoughtless confidence,—while their confidence has no better foundation than LIGHT IMPRESSIONS OF THE EVIL OF SIN;—or rather, I should perhaps say—(for such persons seldom think at all of what sin is in itself)—of the evil of THEIR OWN sins. In forming their estimates of these (if estimates they can be called, which cost not a moment's serious thought) they judge by false standards. They never think of a faithful application to themselves of the only true one,—the heart-searching law of the heart-searching God. They think of the laws of men;—or of human sys-

tems of virtue;—or of prevalent opinions as to good and evil among fellow-men who are as thoughtless, and worldly, and easy in their sins, as themselves;—or (most common of all) they judge of themselves by hasty comparison with others,—"measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves amongst themselves:"—they are no worse, they allege, than their neighbours,—better, certainly, than some of them; and they flatter themselves they stand at least as good a chance in the end, as most other men.—They have neither conception nor impression—(for in truth they have not at all thought of the matter) of the turpitude of sin, as committed against the authority, the purity, the goodness, and the glory of the infinite God;—and as tending (were it allowed to operate according to its fatal influence) to overturn the throne of God's moral government, to set the creature above the Creator, to frustrate all the ends of God in creation, and to spread insubordination, wretchedness, and ruin throughout the universe.—For their parts, they can see no great harm in many of those things which some censorious divines, who would have them to be "righteous overmuch," call *sins*. They are no more than what their nature dictates;—they do not mean any great evil by them;—and they cannot bring themselves to believe that they will be called to so strict and stern an account for them, as those rigid doctors are ever fanatically forewarning them. Thus

lightly do they talk to one another; and by *talking* lightly they confirm themselves in the habit of *thinking* lightly, or of not thinking at all. The subject is one, in truth, on which they have any thing but a disposition to dwell:—for, whenever a moment's reflection does chance to flash across their minds, they feel that it is as far as possible from being welcome. "They start and shrink:"—and, being resolved on having the indulgence, and sensible that all serious thought interferes with and mars it, they do the best they can to prevent or to banish it, and to put it off to a future and indefinite day.

O! could I but fix for one moment the levity of such unreflecting minds, and get them, for that moment, to look at the scene which the text brings before their view! If you rightly regard that scene, all your light thoughts of sin will, by that one moment's contemplation of it, be for ever dissipated. You will tremble at the idea of your having ever entertained them, and having buoyed up your vain minds by views so false and so unworthy.—Look here. Think what was done in the green tree. Think, *who* this was,—*what* he suffered,—and *why* he endured it. You will then see how widely different are God's thoughts of sin and yours. You will then see, that every light thought of sin that has found a place in your bosom, has been a flagrant insult to the Most High and the Most Holy; —a scornful setting aside of his revealed judgment;

—a contempt of his most solemn assurances and threatenings;—a disdainful regardlessness of his glory, and of all the steps his wisdom has taken to secure it;—and a basely ungrateful requital of his grace, and disowning of his proffered mercy. O! if the scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary had but a glance of your eye, with a just conception of their propitiatory character,—how would all the hopes vanish which have been cherished by your light and easy notions of the evil of sin! You would at once see and feel that God was against you. The conviction would fasten itself in your consciences, that in his eyes sin could be no trifle, when it needed such an expiation, ere in one instance it could be forgiven. You would weep to think that you should ever have treated with such indifference what cost the Son of God and Saviour of men so dear.—Not the waters that of old engulphed a guilty world,—not the sulphurous fires that consumed the cities of the plain,—not the unequalled woes that fell upon the bloody city, where the Lord of life was crucified, and which scattered its outcast children to the four winds of heaven,—not all the accumulation of sufferings, in their infinitely diversified kinds, that have come, in judicial visitation, on the fallen race of men, from the beginning until now,—not even "the worm that dieth not and the fire that never shall be quenched,"—would so impress you with the "exceeding sinfulness" of sin, as the sight of a

dying Saviour,—of IMMANUEL, as the sacrificial victim, effecting your deliverance from its curse, by his expiatory agonies and blood! While you turn aside and look on this amazing sight, you will feel as if every sin of which you had ever been guilty were a drop, of your own infusing, in the bitterness of his cup; or as if by every sin you had been pressing the thorns into his bleeding brow, or driving one of the nails through his hands or his feet, and fastening it in the accursed tree. Away, my fellow-sinners,—O! away with your light thoughts of sin; and away with all the delusive and desperate hopes engendered and maintained by them! —"For if these things were done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"

4. There is only another class to whom at present I would apply the question. It is a very numerous one; not, by any means, distinct from the last,—for, as might be supposed, the two are generally blended together, — but still deserving a separate notice. I refer to the vast numbers whose hopes, such as they are, have their basis in vague and undefined conceptions of the GENERAL MERCY OF GOD. — There is no source of delusion more widely prevalent than this.— How many thousands and tens of thousands of consciences have been lulled into perilous peace, —and how many thousands and tens of thousands of immortal souls have been self-deceived and ruined, by the reflection, lightly thrown out, and

coming no deeper than from the lips — "GOD IS MERCIFUL!"—And is it not, you will naturally ask me, a truth? Are you about to hold up to us the scene in your text, as a proof that God is *not* merciful?—that in saying he is merciful, we are mistaken?—No, my friends. Blessed be God! it *is* a truth,—a truth full of joy to sinners; a truth without which hope must have remained for ever a stranger to the human bosom;—without which, justice must have asserted its claim against every son and daughter of Adam, and have swept generation after generation, indiscriminately, into hell. It is a truth, that God is merciful; that he "delighteth in mercy." And, instead of holding up the scene in my text as a proof of the contrary, I point to it as the most wonderful and overpowering evidence of its reality. Nowhere is the delightful truth more impressively taught than here,—in the cross. *More* impressively, did I say? I ought to have said—*so* impressively;—and that too by infinite degrees.—But overlook not, and forget not, the other lesson, which, we have seen, is read with equal clearness here; — that this merciful God is, at the same time, holy and just,—"of purer eyes than to behold evil," and determined to punish it. These attributes of his character may not be to your mind. They do not suit your purpose. They do not keep you easy in your worldliness and sin. But your reason itself must tell you, that they

are as essential to the divine character as its mercy;—and if you are, thoughtlessly, ascribing to God a mercy that can ever, in its exercise, be unassociated with the perfection of holiness and justice, you are ascribing to him an attribute that has no place in his nature. The mercy of which *you* so inconsiderately and lightly talk, it is an insult to ascribe to him; for it is a mercy that keeps you at ease in the disregard and transgression of his will. You compliment him with the designation of *merciful*, only that you may, without fear, set at nought his authority, and dishonour his holiness!—But look here;—and see what the God is "with whom you have to do." A merciful God,—I rejoice to grant,—unutterably, inconceivably, infinitely merciful:—but at the same time, a God of immaculate purity and inflexible righteousness,—testifying, in the scene before you, what he thinks of sin, how infinitely he hates it, and with what a fearful punitive vengeance he will infallibly recompense it. I ask you, then, one question. You tell me, God is merciful. I grant it. But my question is—will he be more merciful *to you*, think you, than to *his own Son?* If he "spared not his own Son,"—if he "bruised him and put him to grief,"—if he suffered him to die the death,—if even his "strong crying and tears" could not prevail to extract or to diminish the bitterness of his cup of expiatory sorrows;—think you that he will relent at the cry

of your selfish despair,—or fail to inflict on you what his word has threatened, and what your sins deserve?—especially, when to all your other sins you have added that of lightly esteeming that very Son of his love in whom he is well-pleased, and setting at nought the very blood by which the atonement was made for your sins, and by faith in which you might have ensured their forgiveness? O think it not:—O expect it not. "If these things were done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" Be assured, that God will prove himself faithful to his threatenings, as well as to his promises; that he will fulfil, to their full extent, in the experience of every impenitent sinner, the denunciations of his word against all iniquity. These denunciations are not the outbursts of any fitful and passing emotion,—not the utterance of a spirit perturbed with temporary anger,—from which, when the emotion subsides, there may be a relenting and resiling. Such passion, and such weakness, belong to the creature, not to God. The infinite Mind is the seat of no such perturbation, and of no such mutability. His denunciations are the calm and solemn declaration of the settled principles of his government. These are as unchangeable as himself. He cannot threaten what he will not execute. Let no fallacious views of his mercy cheat you into hopes that can never be realized. In the scene before you, the mercy of God *is* seen,—seen in all its inex-

haustible fulness, and in all its unfettered freeness. But the mercy that is seen here, is not a mercy that connives at and tolerates sin. No, nor is it a mercy, I would have you further to remember, that is satisfied with bestowing its pardon, or remitting its penalty. It is a mercy, whose grand aim is its destruction; its destruction, not in its curse and punishment merely, but in its power and its being; in a word, its entire and eternal removal from the soul. If you are indulging hope, while you are living in carelessness and sin, and walking according to the course of this world, you are miserably mistaking the true nature of God's mercy, and as miserably the true ends of Christ's mediation,—of the atonement made by him on the cross. You are abusing both. You are, by such a course, preparing yourselves for perdition, as fuel for the fire. The atonement was never meant to save you *in* your sins, but to save you *from* them. And unless you are saved from their power, you are not saved from their guilt. In your ears the Saviour still sounds his warning—"If these things are done in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"—Read the lesson, and tremble:—read it, and rejoice. The mercy of God is still set before you, for your acceptance, through the cross. You see there what that mercy has done for sinners. You see there what the grace of the Divine Saviour has done for sinners,—has done *for you*. What an awful thing it is,

when, instead of being melted down and won over to the side of God and of his Christ by this display of love,—of love which so far exceeds all our measurements,—which "passeth knowledge,"—sinners are tempted by it to encourage themselves in that which God hates, and that which brought upon the Redeemer all his woes! — when mercy itself hardens!—when the manifestation of love to sinners, though necessarily along with hatred of their sins, has no other influence than that of encouraging them in rebellion, and flattering them with the hopes of impunity! Surely there cannot be conduct baser, there cannot be guilt deeper, than this. Let sinners beware of it. Let them not,—let not any one of you, my hearers, allow yourselves to fancy, that a holy Saviour has atoned for sin by agonies so fearful, in order that you might have licence to practise it, or ease of mind under its unrepealed sentence. No, my friends. The cross, —the atoning blood shed on Calvary—proclaims and ensures pardoning mercy, with all the subsequent blessings of salvation,—to all who believe in Jesus :—but to the unbelieving and impenitently disobedient, it only confirms the sentence of death, and demonstrates the certainity of its execution.—O flee from the wrath to come! Flee to the cross, on which the Saviour bore your iniquities; that, fleeing thither, and trusting in his blood, you may have pardon and life.—Fellow-sinners, we cannot be satisfied with any thing short of this. Faithful-

ness to your souls will not allow us to leave you at any stage short of this. The apostles never satisfied themselves with bringing sinners a certain way; never satisfied themselves with any thing short of their actually coming to Christ, believing in Christ, trusting in Christ, rejoicing in Christ, giving themselves up to Christ. Our entreaty, then, is—that you come,—and that you come *now;*—not that you wait,—not that you prepare,—but that you come; that you come, with all your sinfulness, and all your guilt;—not trying to rid yourselves of some little of it first, and so to make yourselves, in your own vain fancy, more worthy to come to him; but, in the full conviction of the hopeless presumption of every such attempt, to come to him by whom alone *any* of it can be taken away, and who is as able as he is willing, and as willing as he is able, to take it *all* away;—"whose blood cleanseth from all sin," and without whose blood there is no remission,—its propitiatory virtue being as indispensable for the least of sinners, as it is sufficient for the greatest; there being "no salvation in any other,—no other name under heaven, given among men, whereby any can be saved."—On the ground of the universal atonement, we have the fullest freedom in telling you that there is no obstacle to your pardon. Your sins could not have been pardoned, had they not been atoned for:—but the gospel tells us that they *have* been atoned for,—that they were included in the indefinite and

infinitely availing propitiation; and therefore we have no misgiving, no hesitation, in inviting you to come and accept the universally offered forgiveness. Come now;—believe now;—trust now;—accept the pardon now;—make God your friend now;—and go now on your way rejoicing.

The text sets Christ before you, as the "man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs." But there is a time approaching, when he who appeared as the man of sorrows shall appear again as the Lord of glory. And *how* shall he come?—how shall he be revealed? His own word tells us:—"The Lord Jesus shall be revealed, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe, in that day."* —In which of these two classes would you wish in that day to be found? Surely, in every bosom, if you have any faith at all in the prediction of that great closing day of our world's and our race's history, there can be but one answer to this question. And be not incredulous. He came the first time, in spite of all the scoffings of unbelief; and, in spite of the same scoffings, he *will* come the

* 2 Thes. i. 7—10.

second. He came the first time to save; he will come the second time to judge. It is only by believing in the atonement made by him at his first coming, that you can have solid peace and hope in looking forward to his coming again:—only by trusting in him as dying on the cross, that you can stand accepted before him when he sits on the throne. If any of you persist in your unbelieving, ungrateful, and infatuated refusal of his grace,—thus forsaking your own mercies, and wilfully sealing your own condemnation, sadly will you know, in that day, the full import of the words of him who on earth "bore our griefs and carried our sorrows:"—"If these things be done in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"

And as for you, my fellow-christians,—you, who have appreciated the Saviour's atonement, and, resting on its infinite sufficiency, have "received the reconciliation:"—you have found peace. And *how* have you found it?—by the blood of the cross. Let me, then, first of all, affectionately remind you, that the source of your peace must remain ever the same. The peace which you have *found* through the blood of the cross, you must *retain* through the blood of the cross. There is no peace to sinners but on Calvary. There, around the cross, you must pitch your tents. It was there,—on that "mount of the Lord,"—that "the Lamb was provided for the burnt-offering." The colony of humble settlers there "dwell safely and

are quiet from fear of evil." You must not wander beyond the boundary of that "hill of blessing." The moment you quit its sacred precincts, the law arrests you, and consigns you to condemnation and death.

Let me farther remind you, that Calvary is the hill of holiness as well as of peace. All around the cross is holy ground. They who take up their dwelling there must be "washed and sanctified" as well as "justified." He is not pardoned, who has not been purified. And, as Jehovah said of old concerning the murderer—"Thou shalt take him from mine altar that he may die,"—so may we say of the man who professes to have betaken himself to Calvary for safety, while his heart is still in love with sin and the world, and who clings to the sacred tree with unholy hands,—he shall be taken from the very cross, that he may die!

And, last of all, let me say to you, in a single word—When you have yourselves "received the reconciliation," and have "passed from death unto life," — have compassion on your fellow-sinners, who are still at a distance from Calvary and from safety. Try to draw them to the cross. Hold forth to them the great propitiation. Tell them of its infinite worth. Tell them of the fulness and the freeness of a Saviour's grace. Leave no means of persuasion untried, to increase the number of the saved. Tell them of an atonement for all; and of pardon, and peace, and life, and everlasting salva-

tion, to all who believe in that atonement. Your own joy will increase, in proportion as others flock to share it. And the very thought of men of every kindred and people and nation and tongue hearing of the atonement, and becoming partakers of its saving virtue, is the fulness of joy to every believing soul.—"Now blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory! Amen, and Amen!"

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